



Justin O. Van Epps

March 4, 1971 - December 28, 2025

Portsmouth - Justin Oliver Van Epps, 54, of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, passed away peacefully on December 28, 2025, at his home surrounded by loving family. He had been battling kidney cancer.

Justin was born March 4, 1971, in Buffalo, New York, the son of David and Joan Howles Van Epps. He spent his earliest years in Buffalo before moving with his family to Morristown, New Jersey, and later, Loveland, Ohio. He graduated from Sycamore High School in Montgomery, Ohio, then attended Miami University of Ohio, earning a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science with a minor in Geology, subjects that reflected his passion for spirited debate and love of the natural world.

Justin moved to New Hampshire in 1993, and with entrepreneurial spirit, opened The Mad Hatter Cafe in Durham. He sold the cafe a year later but remained a lifelong stickler for good coffee. His career took him to Cabletron, with later roles at Cisco Systems and the Small Business Administration in Washington, DC. In 2007, he founded Carabiner Consulting, a firm that would thrive for nearly twenty years without advertising or a website, relying strictly on word-of-mouth recommendations. In work as in life, Justin's optimism, sincerity, thoughtfulness, and creative, out-of-the-box thinking ensured success.

Justin met his wife, Hope Lindley, through Cabletron, where he quickly captured her heart after she relocated from her native Memphis. The couple married on August 1, 1998, at the Eagle Mountain House in Jackson, New Hampshire. They shared 29 years of adventures, 27 years of marriage, and three beautiful children, Liam, Caleb, and Sophia. Justin thrived as a dad, parenting with patience, love, humor, and unwavering devotion.

Justin and Hope shared a passion for travel that they instilled in their children. As a family, they shared many memorable adventures, including visits with his relatives in Sicily and a trip to the 2024 Paris Olympics. Closer to home, Justin loved hiking the White Mountains and spent much time in the Presidential Range; The 4000 ft Mount Jefferson was his favorite. He could often be found with a camera in hand, exploring coastal tide pools, attending local concerts and festivals, writing poetry, walking Lenny the dog all over town, and cooking up pancakes. A lifelong athlete, Justin was devoted to soccer. He played for the Timberland team in the Seacoast United Men's League, returning to the field following a heart attack in 2020, a reflection of his strong will and the joy he found in the soccer community.

Justin prioritized community caring and involvement, supporting Habitat for Humanity, New Canaan Society, Portsmouth Historical Society, local food banks, and other organizations as a volunteer, donor, or advisor. Having made numerous moves, he was active in many local churches throughout his lifetime. He valued living simply, with authenticity, gratitude, and following the teachings of Jesus. He lived his faith by meeting others where they were in life, offering unconditional love, and teaching his children to do the same. Leading by example, his nightly dinner blessing always focused on giving back to others as Christ had given to him.

Remaining to cherish Justin's memory are his wife, Hope; his children, Liam, Caleb, and Sophia; his mother, Joan Van Epps; sisters Heather Van Epps

(Mark Palfreyman) and Sharon Van Epps (John Clements) honorary brothers Troy Bellot and Reid Sexton, and a long list of beloved nieces and nephews. Justin was preceded in death by his father, G. David Van Epps.

A celebration of Justin's life will be held in the spring. Details forthcoming.

In lieu of meals or flowers, Justin requested donations to GATHER by clicking here (<https://www.gathernh.org/donate>) or Red's Good Vibes by clicking here (<https://www.redsgoodvibes.com/donate>) to support neighbors in need on the Seacoast.

Tribute Wall

IS

“ *To Joan & Family*

Sorry to hear about Justin's passing.

Condolences

The Schnelle Family

Judy, Ira, Dona and Adrienne

Ira Schnelle - January 07 at 08:31 AM

HE

“Hey, It’s your Brother. Give me a call” (said with Justin’s bravado) was a steady refrain in my life. A regular check in. Steady and firm, optimistic and insistent.

(Show the rock from the sea) I brought a granite rock from the shore of NH where Justin liked to play and reflect. Justin was a force of nature. He was fierce in his unstoppable inquisitive nature, and his love for people and the world. Even in his final hour he insisted, with a vigorous raised finger, that he join us in celebrating our mom’s birthday. There is something special about being a sibling to Justin. The force of it grounds me and challenges me all at once.

Growing up my brother and I were very different from each other. We argued like normal siblings. I may have thrown a brush or two. However, that was just surface nonsense around a steady and unbreakable bond. That foundation gave me strength. He would worry about me, encourage me, and ALWAYS fight for me. I remember playing tag under the streetlights together. Hitching my red wagon to his bike to bump wildly along the NJ streets. I flew because of my brother.

Justin’s optimistic will moved mountains and inspires me to this day. His righteous view of the world shaped us, shaped our world. One of my favorite stories is of him bringing a homeless person to dinner. When the waiter turned up his nose, Justin insisted: He is with me. We will eat. Injustice was simply unacceptable to Justin. He pushed it away with natural charm and unwavering determination. When he considered clinical trials he was not inspired to help himself, he was inspired to be with us and by the opportunity to help someone else facing a similar challenge. This is how I want to go through my life. Fighting to make our world a better place.

In the last week, Justin looked at me with his kind eyes and said, “I am proud of who you have become”. This bratty little wild one grew up. The success that he saw—my courage to reach for the stars and my grounded nature—was anchored in Justin’s strength, cheering me on, always in my corner.

My husband and I have two wild and wonderful children, Isela and Laszlo. They could not be more different, just like Jussy and I. I see

us in them when they conspire together against Mark and I, console each other in moments of sadness, and challenge each other. I hope they are building that same sibling foundation, forged in love and shared experience. We have two children, due to my hope there is even a chance that they will have what Jussy and I have had in all its messy wonderfulness.

Justin you are my rock. Like a rock shifts the surrounding sand, you shaped me. Even in your absence the shoreline is forever changed. You'll be there in who I am. You'll be there in those who know you. You'll be there when I choose to love fiercely, to stand for what I believe in, to stubbornly decide to reshape the world around me – to make the world a better, fairer place. That strength lives on in me. That strength lives on in us. Let us carry it.

Heather Van epps - January 06 at 03:49 PM

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I shared this in a small gathering in Jan 3, 2025

Heather Van epps - January 06 at 03:51 PM

HH

This is such a lovely tribute and is exactly the Justin we will always carry with us. Love, the Hanson family

Heidi Hanson - February 20 at 01:16 PM