



## Robert J. Dunfey Sr.

February 9, 1928 - August 23, 2016

Co-Founder, Omni-Dunfey Hotels International and  
Peace-BUILDER, Northern Ireland

Robert John 'Bob' Dunfey, Sr. of Portsmouth, NH and formerly of Cape Elizabeth, ME, died peacefully on Tuesday, August 23, 2016, surrounded by loving family including his devoted wife, Jeanette Marston Dunfey who tirelessly cared for him during his long and valiant struggle against Parkinson's Disease.

Bob was born February 9, 1928 in Lowell, MA, the seventh of twelve children of Catherine and LeRoy Dunfey. He was educated at St. Patrick's School and Keith Academy, both in Lowell.

He is survived by former wife Shirley (Corey) Dunfey, and five children: Robert Dunfey, Jr. Cape Elizabeth, ME; Roy and Karen Dunfey, Portland, ME; Eileen Dunfey and Michael Pulsifer, Cape Elizabeth, ME; Brian Dunfey, South Berwick, ME; Maryanne Dunfey, North Conway, NH; 10 grandchildren and 3 great-grandchildren.

He is also survived by 4 of his 11 siblings: Jack and his wife Lisa of Boston; Eileen Robinson of Bradenton, FL; Jerry and his wife Nadine Hack of Lutry, Switzerland; Eleanor Dunfey and her husband Jim Freiburger of Exeter, NH;

many dear cousins in Ballyferriter, Co.Kerry, Ireland; and his wife Jeanette's devoted Marston family.

He was pre-deceased by his parents Catherine and LeRoy and 7 Dunfey siblings: Roy, Paul, Catherine, 'Kay,' Mary, William 'Bud,' and Richard, 'Dick,' and Walter.

Rarely in the 88 years of Bob Dunfey's life was he in or did he seek the limelight, but a look behind the scenes in meetings, conversations, and telephone calls would reveal Bob's signature contributions. The seventh child in a family of 12 knew from the beginning that his life would be that of bridge builder, connector, supporter of worthy causes.

Too young to enlist in WWII with his older brothers, he became the indispensable "right hand" for his father and role model for his younger siblings by doing the often thankless hard work— behind the counter in the family's luncheonette and variety store in Lowell, MA's 'ACRE,' the home of so many first generation Irish and other immigrants. To this day, his closest friend and partner, brother Jack, credits Bob's energy and hard work as the distinct factor that grew the family business from one small business to fried clam stands at Hampton Beach then on to restaurants, motels and hotels throughout New England, an evolution which led to the purchase of Boston's famous Parker House in 1968 and later became Omni Hotels International.

Bob's work in the business community had a significant impact on the Maine economy. In 1966 Bob successfully led the controversial campaign to allow restaurants, lounges and hotels to sell alcoholic beverages on Sunday which was prohibited by law. Another major contribution was the development of the Maine Mall.

During Bobby Kennedy's 1968 campaign for President, Bobby would

personally call Bob each Sunday to hear how the campaign was going in Maine. In 1980, on behalf of Maine Governor Brennan, Bob asked Federal Judge George Mitchell to fill the senate seat of Edmund Muskie, newly appointed Secretary of State by President Carter. Mitchell accepted.

As an active father he helped raise his family in Cape Elizabeth. His favorite places were Prout's Neck walking the beach and the bird walk, boating around Casco Bay and riding his bike along the New England Coast. In 1965, he built a ski chalet in North Conway where his family and grandchildren spent winter weekends skiing Cranmore Mountain and snowmobiling, He also arranged many family ski trips to Vail at Thanksgiving.

But his pride and joy was the house he had built in Ballyferriter, Ireland with the most amazing view of ocean and cliffs. His purpose was to have new generations of family reconnect with Irish relatives. His school master and archeologist cousin, Denis O'Connor helped Bob select the perfect Irish name: Feorann: "edge of the sea, a verdant bank on a mountainside..." Over 35 years, Bob expanded that word's meaning to include: a bit of heaven to be shared with all!

He generously opened his Irish home to family, countless friends—even friends of friends. He introduced Senators George Mitchell, Ted Kennedy, Patrick Leahy, and Chris Dodd to the expansive beauty and warm hospitality of the Dingle Peninsula. Bob believed as every Kerryman does, that there are only two kingdoms: The Kingdom of God and The Kingdom of Kerry; "One is of this world and one is out of this world!"

Robert J. 'Bob' Dunfey, Sr. was a trustee of the University of Maine System; a director of the American Ireland Funds; founder and honorary director of the Susan L. Curtis Foundation, which operates a 50-acre summer camp for Maine's underprivileged children. Bob was a founding director of the Maine

Community Foundation. Bob served on the Spurwink Board of Trustees for 14 years, and was honored as the inaugural Humanitarian of the Year in 1987.

He was founding treasurer and director of New England Circle/Global Citizens Circle, a 40-year old non-profit forum that brings leaders and activists together for civil dialogue on critical issues that lead to constructive change in our local and global communities. Bob worked tirelessly to support initiatives in Northern Ireland and cultural preservation projects in the South of Ireland. For his extraordinary efforts over 40 years on the Isle of Ireland, he was honored with several major awards by all the Parties to the Peace Process as a trusted behind the scenes partner for all who were interested in moving beyond “The Troubles.”

He was an advisor for the White House Conference for Trade and Investment in Northern Ireland. He participated with Sen. George Mitchell, President Clinton’s Special Envoy for Economic Initiatives for Northern Ireland, on the Senator’s first tour of Belfast, Derry, and Border Towns.

Bob and his brother, Jack Dunfey, traveled to Oslo with John Hume and David Trimble and their families when the two Northern Ireland leaders were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1998.

Perhaps it is in the reflections of others that we see the worth of a life well lived. Julia Brown, Bob’s granddaughter, offers such a reflection and two dear friends warmly affirm her tribute:

“Our Papa leaves an amazing legacy as a humanitarian and activist. He touched so many lives and made such a memorable impact in this world. He will be immensely missed by his loving family and wide circle of friends.” One of those dear and longtime friends, Jackie Redpath, Belfast Shankill Community Centre, who worked so closely alongside Bob, shares that sentiment: “Bob was a 'great man'. In Ireland, in Belfast, on the Shankill &

Falls, he straddled 'both sides' & both extremes and I am forever grateful for his, and your family's, bringing 'loyalism/unionism' in from the cold and giving us a seat 'at the top table' in the United States. People are alive today, who would not otherwise be, on account of this. Bob was strong, sincere, determined, wise, sensitive and great damn fun. He was very kind to me and I will miss him.

It was his beloved Maine, however, that Bob served first and foremost, and the Susan Curtis Foundation expresses best, all that Bob Dunfey means to them: "It may comfort you to know that this summer, nearly 500 youth learned about themselves and who they can be, while developing the character, skills and life lessons they need to reach their dreams. Over 16,000 youth have had that same experience since Camp Susan Curtis opened its doors in 1974. None of this would have happened without Bob. He lives on in the thousands of Maine youth (and former Maine youth – now adults!) who are succeeding and thriving in part because they mattered at Camp Susan Curtis. He will forever be a part of us and we will miss him."

A celebration of Bob's life will be held at St. John's Episcopal Church, 100 Chapel Street, Portsmouth, NH at 11 A.M. Saturday, September 10, 2016. Honoring Bob's wish, his ashes will be interred in the family's ancestral grave in Ballyferriter, Ireland alongside his sister, Mary; brother, Walter; and nephew, Philip, at a time convenient to the family. The family requests that, in lieu of flowers, friends consider a contribution in Bob's memory to the Susan Curtis Foundation 1321 Washington Ave # 104, Portland, ME 04103 or to a cause of one's choice.

TO: ALL WHO PLAN TO ATTEND BOB'S CELEBRATION OF LIFE AT ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH, 101 CHAPEL ST, PORTSMOUTH ON SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 10 AT 11AM,

WE STRONGLY URGE YOU TO CARPOOL OR, IF YOU DRIVE TO ARRIVE EARLY. WHILE THERE WILL BE PARKING AVAILABLE IN THE PARISH LOTS, THEY ARE EXPECTED TO FILL TO CAPACITY QUICKLY.

THANK YOU

Please click the link below to read a story on Mr. Dunfey published Monday in Northern Ireland's Belfast Telegraph..

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/bob-dunfey-an-unsung-american-hero-of-northern-irelands-journey-to-reconciliation-35002185.html>

# Previous Events

## Celebration of Life

SEP **10**. 11:00 AM (ET)

St. John's Episcopal Church  
101 Chapel Road  
Portsmouth, NH 03801

# Tribute Wall



“ *Robert J. Dunfey Sr.*

---

September 18, 2022 at 12:49 AM



“ *My condolences to the Dunfey Family.  
My fondest memories of Bob involve politics and the Kennedys. In 1968, Bob invited me to assist in organizing events at the Eastland Hotel in Portland and the Baldacci Restaurant in Bangor for Senator Robert Kennedy's fledgling presidential campaign. Later that year, and after Bobbie's death, grassroots efforts to nominate Ted Kennedy for President became a ground swell at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago. Attending as delegates from our respective states, Bob and I coordinated with senior Ted Kennedy people and canvassed the convention floor lining up votes anticipating a second ballot. Although we believed there were enough votes, there was no second ballot. Those were exciting times and always fun with Bob Dunfey.  
Jack Sanders*

---

**Jack Sanders** - September 07, 2016 at 02:30 PM



“ *I have a very special place in my heart for Bob Dunfey along with many fond childhood memories. I am thinking of his family during this sad time and want you all to know that I, along with the rest of the Wood family, send our love.*

---

**Wendy Wood Theriault** - September 07, 2016 at 02:22 PM

RD

“ A shining example of how to live, with generosity and kindness. He always made you feel like you were the most important person in the room. He could communicate with world leaders and the common man.

---

**Randall Doiron** - September 05, 2016 at 06:01 PM

SH

“ We will always remember Bob with love and admiration and to our dear friend Jeannette and to Bob's family we offer this healing prayer.

*As those who came before us were blessed in the communities that sustained them--*

*So we offer our blessings for those among us in need of healing.*

*May you have comfort and relief in the healing of the body and mind, heart and soul--*

*May you drink from the waters of the ever giving well--and may you return in time to health and wholesome strength. Sy and Charlie Horton*

---

**Sy Horton** - September 05, 2016 at 09:23 AM



“ Ghirardelli Galore was purchased for the family of Robert J. Dunfey Sr..



---

September 04, 2016 at 04:31 AM

Jeff  
Garland

“ 3 files added to the tribute wall



Jeff Garland - September 04, 2016 at 03:12 AM

ED

Jeff, The pictures wonderful especially the one of Jennifer Casolo, the human rights activist, who had just been released from a Central American prison and welcomed to New England Circle/Global Citizens Circle by (26 years ago) Bob, Jack, and Jerry. Jennifer is still working in Central America and is still in close touch with all of us. Hope you might friend her on Facebook and email her that picture (jcasolo@gmail.com) Thank you on behalf of all the family, Jeff.


Eleanor Dunfey - September 04, 2016 at 08:04 AM

LA

“ It is with extreme sadness that I read about Bob's passing. Bob was an amazing friend to my entire family, for which we are grateful. Bob's love of family and friends inspired us all! Bob made us laugh, especially on the tennis court.....we loved the Sunday afternoon tennis, followed by the never ending and lively political discussions. Joe and Bob had solved all the world issues every Sunday. What great memories growing up.....my parents could not have asked for better friends. Our best to the entire Dunfey family, and especially Bob, Roy, Brian, Mary Ann and Eileen, your dad was a gem.

Liz Angelone & family  
Greenwich, CT

Liz Angelone - September 01, 2016 at 06:17 PM


 Brian  
Dunfey

“ *1 file added to the tribute wall* ”



---

**Brian Dunfey** - September 01, 2016 at 03:39 PM

 Brian  
Dunfe

“ We were very sorry to hear of Bob's passing and would like to offer our sincere sympathy to you and all of the members of the Dunfe family.

*For many years he was the member of the Dunfe family that we had most contact with.*

*He will be remembered in Corca Dhuibhne as a gentle man in every way. He was quiet spoken. Not somebody to push himself forward.*

*Bob was a good friend and a wise adviser. He pointed the best way forward.*

*Your family played a vital part in the preservation and development of the culture and heritage as well as the economic life of Corca Dhuibhne that will be felt for many generations to come. Bob played a key role in this.*

*The seed monies donated by the Dunfe's (through the Ireland Fund) were key in the development of the Ballyferriter Museum and major archaeological excavations at Dun Urlan and Baile Miniurach.*

*Bob had Senators George Mitchell and Ted Kennedy among many others stay at his spectacularly located home in Ballyferriter looking down on Clogher beach and the Corca Dhuibhne coast. As a result a great many people were encouraged to visit this area with significant economic benefits.*

*It is a single honor that Bob has chosen his final resting place to be the ancestral family grave here in his mother's native place.*

*If we can help in any way please let me know.*

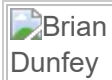
*Please pass on our sympathies to all of the family.*

*Yours sincerely*

*Gearoid O Brosnachain  
General Manager  
Comharchumann Forbartha Chorca Dhuibhne/  
Corca Dhuibhne Development Co-operative*

---

**Brian Dunfey** - September 01, 2016 at 03:34 PM



Brian  
Dunfey

“ *I just heard the sad news about Bob's passing. Please give my condolences to the family. He was the most wonderful man as indeed you all are. He lived a life much respected and has passed from this world much regretted.*

*Your friend,  
Monica*

*(Monica McWilliams - Northern Ireland Women's Coalition)*

---

**Brian Dunfey** - September 01, 2016 at 03:25 PM

 Brian  
Dunfey

“ *My grandfather was an inspiration. His life achievements, compassion, determination, perseverance and love for his friends and family are qualities that I try to emulate. He has been a rock of stability for me throughout my life and I miss him and celebrate his passing. I can't imagine someone who fought through Parkinson's with "great stoicism" would ever want us to be sad for his passing so I am determined to look on his life and death with great happiness.*

*When I left him the day before he passed, I walked over the Cocheco river on a walking bridge in back of the hospice and as my friends and I looked down I saw the largest snapping turtle of my life, it was close to 4 feet long and had a great tail. It swam gently up the warm and sunny river. As this ancient and gentle being glided safely through the waters I could not help but think, everything will be alright, he will be in a better place soon. And so it went, relieved from his Parkinson's I can only imagine he now glides safely and gently up steam to return to a place of peace and love.*

*Kyle*

*(Kyle Ball)*

---

**Brian Dunfey** - September 01, 2016 at 03:22 PM



Brian  
Dunfey

“ *To the Dunfey family*

*My condolences to you both and the extended Dunfey family on the passing of Bob. He fought a long battle and it must have been very hard on all of you watching him go through this and not to have the ease of communication. I know how you loved to talk to each other. You will be glad to know we always looked forward to the Dunfey visits through the years.*

*Regards,  
Doncha*

*(Doncha O'Connor)*

---

**Brian Dunfey** - September 01, 2016 at 03:21 PM




ED

*So true, Doncha -- Thank you for your very thoughtful message. So happy that Kyle was with you for the Harvest Mass and a visit. He was so, so helpful especially during his Papa's last months.*

---

**Eleanor Dunfey** - September 14, 2016 at 08:17 AM

 Brian  
Dunfey

“ *Just a short note to pass on our very deepest sympathies to you and to Jack, Lisa and especially to dear Jeanette. Words are so inadequate at a time like this but please be assured that you are all in our thoughts and prayers.*

*What an amazing life that touched all of us in very special ways. Of course there was Bob's very deep commitment to peace in Ireland and to justice and fairness. A man who managed to live his values quietly but also as a shining light for others. Not an easy trick. Then there was his faithful friendship and his generous never ending willingness to help. It was a great privilege to have him as a friend. We will miss all of this but especially his wicked sense of fun. What a great joy it was to spend time in his company. He has left us all a great example. We will be doing well if we manage to live up to a fraction of it.*

*Much love*

*Martin, Helen, JP and Kate.*

*(Martin O'Brien)*

---

**Brian Dunfey** - September 01, 2016 at 03:18 PM

 ED

*Thank you, Martin, for giving Bob, Jeanette and all of us the best gift of all -- your presence with us this past weekend--gratitude beyond words...*

---

**Eleanor Dunfey** - September 14, 2016 at 08:19 AM

 Brian  
Dunfey

“ *1 file added to the tribute wall*



---

**Brian Dunfey** - August 31, 2016 at 02:48 PM

 Brian  
Dunfey

“ *I was just notified of your father's passing and as a result just finished reading his obituary. Peace, thoughts and prayers to all of you on this beautiful Maine day. Your dad was a very accomplished and giving man. A life well lived.*


*I will always remember your parents parading you into Mass on Sunday mornings. A wonderful legacy your dad has left behind. May God bless all of you.*

*Warm regards and condolences to the entire Dunfey Family,*

*Joanie  
(Joan Benoit Samuelson)*

---

**Brian Dunfey** - August 31, 2016 at 02:44 PM



Brian  
Dunfey

“ *Wednesday morning I was walking up 6th Avenue in NYC when a young guy, a stranger to me, stopped and asked if I'd heard that Bob Dunfey had died. He was originally from Rye, works for UBS and his mother had called to tell him that another of the Dunfey clan was gone. It got me thinking about all the grand times we had with Walter and what a gracious, smiling, content man Bob was. We've been fortunate to know them Ed and it's sad that in this instant and disappearing Information Age we live in that too many do really not know the impact for good that one family has had on so many. Hope you're well and thanks for the note.*

*Mike Barnicle*

---

**Brian Dunfey** - August 31, 2016 at 02:39 PM




Brian  
Dunfey

“ *We send you our deepest condolences as you and others give thanks for the wonderfully productive life of your beloved brother inlay.  
May God wipe away your tears and give you comfort.  
Much love and blessings,  
Arch.*

---

**Brian Dunfey** - August 31, 2016 at 02:38 PM



Brian  
Dunfey

“ *Dear Jeanette and all the Dunfey family,*

*Our sincere condolences for your loss. I called my mum and passed on the news since she does not have Internet access in Donegal. She has asked me to pass on both her and dad's warmest wishes to all the family at this sad time. She spoke very fondly of Bob, and with genuine admiration for all he had done.*

*You are all very much in our thoughts.*

*All best wishes,*

*Mo  
(John Hume's Daughter)*

---

**Brian Dunfey** - August 31, 2016 at 02:34 PM



Brian  
Dunfey

“ *Dear Jeanette and Dunfey's all,*

*We are saddened to hear of Bob's passing. He has touched our hearts and been a great friend to my Dad (Doncha) and family.*

*We think of you during this sad time.*

*With our deepest condolences,*

*Líle, Celia and Aodán and all the O'Connor family.*

---

**Brian Dunfey** - August 31, 2016 at 02:26 PM

Brian  
Dunfey

“ So, so sorry to learn of Bob's passing. I had a special closeness to Bob as we worked for peace in Ireland. It will always remain discreet to that 'fair wind' that brought us together. Pascal wrote, ' A man does not show his greatness by being at one extremity, but rather by touching both at once'.

By this measure, & there are others, we can say that Bob was a 'great man'. In Ireland, in Belfast, on the Shankill & Falls, he straddled 'both sides' & both extremes & I am forever grateful for his, & your family's, bringing 'loyalism/unionism' in from the cold & giving us a seat 'at the top table' in the United States. People are alive today, who would not otherwise be, on account of this.

Bob was strong, sincere, determined, wise, sensitive & great damn fun. He was very kind to me & I will miss him.

In all of this Eleanor, I am aware of the special love between sister & brother & at this time Angila's & my thoughts are with you.

Jackie & Angila

---

**Brian Dunfey** - August 31, 2016 at 02:25 PM

JF

“ 1 file added to the album 12th Anniversary



---

**Jim Freiburger** - August 31, 2016 at 02:01 PM

DS

“ Dear Jeanette, George and I are sending you and the family our sincere sympathy. We so enjoyed our Sunday brunches with you and Bob after church in Portsmouth. We are in NYC for a wedding the weekend of the 10th but our thoughts and prayers will be with you and Bob. With love, Dawn & George

Dawn Stiles - August 31, 2016 at 07:32 AM

SW

“ 1 file added to the album New Album Name



Susan Wilson - August 30, 2016 at 04:33 PM

ED

“ 11 files added to the tribute wall



Eileen Dunfey - August 30, 2016 at 02:08 PM

JM

“ *Omni Parker House associates will donate to the Jimmy Fund in memory of Bob Dunfey and his contributions to our hotel. Thank you, Bob!*

*John Murtha*

---

**John Murtha** - August 30, 2016 at 06:12 AM

BB

“ *1 file added to the tribute wall*



---

**Bob Bournival** - August 29, 2016 at 09:32 PM

BB

“ *2 files added to the album New Album Name*



---

**Bob Bournival** - August 29, 2016 at 09:23 PM

BN

“ My "Irish Dad" passed away on 8/23/16. He did so much for our society. See the attachment about all his achievements. But he always looked to help the person who needed it most.

*This Irish immigrant family never forgot their roots in the poverty of Lowell Mass Acre. where their grandparents had come from Ireland where people were starving. (And Commissioner Davis's went to school with one of the Dunfey. ) Bob's Dad started a little variety store/luncheonette and across the counter, all the Dunfey kids learned about immigrants from many countries who came to that store.*

*As for me, Bob was the first person I met when I first immigrated to Portland ME. He helped my ex-husband and me to open our restaurant in the Maine Mall. Without him, it could never have happened because we had so little money.*

*Bob has been my mentor, guiding me on every step with my career. I won't be the "Bik" you know now if not for him and the Dunfey family. My friends know my relationship with the Dunfey family called Bik Fung Dunfey! You know why.*



---

**Bik Fung Ng** - August 29, 2016 at 04:29 PM

JP

“ I am so sorry to hear that Bob is deceased. My condolences to Shirley and Bob's children. Bob hired me to work at the Eastland Hotel in Portland, thus began a 40 plus years in the Restaurant Business. I trained first in the Egyptian Room, as a Hostess, then the Danish Room and finally selected to the newly created "Top of the East" after training at the Carpenter Hotel and the Wayfarer, The Hawaii Discotheque opened with a flare that Portland had not seen. Hawaiian dancers were featured with Flames and Fanfare, Go Go Dancers brought more attendance. Bob was always present in the Hotel making nightly rounds greeting Staff and customers, Later, Bob hired me, because of my former background as a Disc Jockey in the Midwest and WCSH Radio and TV and 3 other prominent local Male Disc Jockeys to play nightly music for Dancing. Bob was always available to his staff. Bob and his brothers brought life to Portland, and Bob, Jerry, and Walter were the Best in the business. Bob loved new ideas. You were expected to work long hours and be " The Best". Because of the Training by the Dunpey Family, I became a Restaurant Manager and Food Service Director. Thank you for the Memories and the Work ethic you expected. My condolences to the Dunpey Family.

---

**Judith Stevens Percival** - August 29, 2016 at 10:49 AM

MD

“ Bob, Roy, Eileen, Brian, Maryanne and Jeanette my sincere condolences on your loss.  
Jack, Eileen, Jerry and Eleanor may you many memories help you through this time of grieving Bob's passing. Mike Downes Sr.

---

**Mike Downes** - August 28, 2016 at 03:33 PM



“ Ar dheas Dé go raibh a anam.

---

**Tom Bulger** - August 28, 2016 at 03:00 PM

ED

“ 1 file added to the album *New Album Name*



Eileen Dunfey - August 28, 2016 at 10:00 AM

NH

*Dear Eileen - just yesterday, Kim and I were saying how much we loved dancing with your dad! I love this picture with Julia! xo, - Nadine*

Nadine Hack - August 29, 2016 at 11:38 AM

ED

“ 9 files added to the tribute wall



Eileen Dunfey - August 28, 2016 at 10:00 AM

JD

“ *Very sorry .. my sincere condolences . Jurgen Demisch*

jurgen demisch - August 28, 2016 at 07:06 AM