

Memorial for Alex McNeil - August 1, 2026

Many thanks and much love to all of you:

**Bill Hoch
Jeff McNeil
Sandy Irving
Ralph Dawson
Gregg Watkins
Dave Poppel
Bob Heckart
Paula Snyder
Dan Thurler
Angelynn Grant
Rick Roth
Cheryl Eagan-Donovan
Ed Englander
Chuck Boisseau
Mel Gluskin
Mary Rhodes
Bill McNeil**



Bill Hoch (pastor)

A SERVICE OF DEATH AND RESURRECTION

Welcome everyone to this celebration of the life of Alex McNeil. On behalf of Alex's family, I want to thank everyone for coming today. One of the blessings that Alex left all of us was the requirement that this service not go much longer than an hour. However, if you need a bathroom [directions]

You are all invited to a reception after the service in the Betty Meyer Gallery, which is also through this door.

THE WORD OF GRACE

We come together in grief, acknowledging our human loss. May we be granted the grace, that in our pain we find comfort from this gathering of friends and family. In our sorrow, may we find resurrection and new life with our memories of Alex.

In this life, we are all hurtling towards death. But death is not the point of our life and should not be the focus. We will all die, but if we live a life full of love, caring, service, and forgiveness, death is not the victor because we will continue after death.

Alex was not churchy in a way that I, as a pastor, like to see in people. But his son Jeff described his father as inquisitive and open to the possibility of a higher power and I'll take that. In the Christian faith, we believe that we continue in some form after death,

[Jesus said,] "Do not let your hearts be troubled. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.

I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid."

Maybe we go to a room where we blessed to live after death and reunite with family and friends or maybe we return to God in a dissolved stew of atoms and energy and love and reconnect to that love and energy, either way, I believe we continue. Regardless of your view of the afterlife, we know that Alex will continue in the memories we have of him. He will continue in the life lessons and skills he taught you, and he will continue in the love that he gave you. Today's speakers will speak to how Alex continues for each of them.

As a pastor, I believe our faith calls us to come together, to support each other, and to enrich each other. I believe God calls us all into loving community. As a neighbor to Jill and Alex, I give thanks

for the building of loving community they have done. Whether it was managing the neighborhood social media, organizing neighborhood Halloween, solstice, and Woodstock parties, or bringing people together in other ways, the McNeil's are builders of community and enrichers of our lives. I give thanks for both Jill and Alex and the faithful work they have done to increase love and connection in this world.

Finally, it's not too much of a stretch to say that I experienced a bit of the divine in Alex's presence. As you know, Jill and Alex's band played our neighborhood Halloween party each year and the band put up with the indignity of allowing neighbors to come and sing songs while the band played. This involved two or three rehearsals and then the big night of the party. Now, it's not too hard to play back up and make some people sound good. For example, Scott Wilson and Dana Ceitlin. Those guys always sound good with the band. But the truly divine experience happened when Alex made Ed Englander a lead singer. Alex helped pick his song, rehearsed with Ed, and created a musical experience where people cried out for more! In that moment, I believed that a divine power was working in our world.

Today, I give thanks for all the love and creativity and community building that flowed through Alex and I welcome his son Jeff to come forward and speak about his dad.

COMMENDATION

God of us all, your love never ends. When all else fails, you still are God. We pray to you for one another in our need, and for all, anywhere, who mourn with us this day. To those who doubt, give light; to those who are weak, strength; to all who have sinned, mercy; to all who sorrow, your peace. Keep true in us the love with which we hold one another. In all our ways we trust you.

O God, all that you have given us is yours. As first you gave Alex to us, now we give him back. We give you thanks for all that Alex has given us to make us who we are. We give you thanks for that of him which lives and grows in each of us and we give you thanks for his life that in your love will never end.

We commit Alex to his final rest. Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust. We are blessed to know that he is surrounded by love.

God of love, we thank you for all with which you have blessed us even to this day. We give thanks for the gifts of your abiding presence, overflowing love, and promise of a brighter future. We give thanks for family and friends. We give thanks for the strength we draw from them.

And now Lord, comfort us in our loneliness, strengthen us in our weakness, and give us courage to face the future unafraid. As our world tries to separate us, help us to fight against division. Draw those of us who remain in this life closer to one another, make us faithful to serve one another. Remind us to celebrate Alex's memory by caring for those around us, staying in loving community with them, and always singing boldly. Finally, as we go from this place, help us to know both peace and joy, the gifts of your love that began creation and sustain us today. Help us to be part of that love in our families and our communities. **Amen.**

[Jeff McNeil's greeting speech notes:]

1—Welcome

So grateful for everyone coming together on this August Saturday.

People came in from all over the US and Canada.

Thanks to the UPA and to all the volunteers who help set this up and are working behind the scenes.

2—Intro

For those who don't know me, I'm Alex's son Jeff.

Joined by my wife Stephanie and our children,

and my sister Joanna and her children.

My mom Jill

Our extended family

3—Saying Goodbye

Passed away about 3 weeks ago

Fortunate as a family to know this was coming

Saying goodbyes are never easy even when you know they're coming.

Since my dad was always about completing tasks, it was no coincidence that he finished his final task on Sunday July 12

Recording some narrated audio for his high school's upcoming reunion this fall.

Funny because underneath his spoken audio on that recording is the roar of his home oxygen machine.

For the last 6 months of his life, the hum of this machine was a constant.

But I'll come back to that oxygen machine later.

4—His Plans for This Service

A month before he died, we had a key conversation about what he envisioned this service would be like

- “An hour tops”
- Speakers from different areas of my life chronologically
- BUT the Speakers have to be warned 2-2.5 mins
- Specific songs

He had been to too many memorial services that dragged on and on and he didn’t want to go out like that

Final weeks, he was thinking about all of us and our experience, he was planning

5—Broaden the Frame

That ability to plan was the first of three qualities

The second was his intellect

ChatGPT debuted in 2022 for you all... but my sister and I had it about 40 years earlier.

See, our dad was, in effect, ChatGPT before it existed.

He seemed to know everything about just about anything.

Alex was person that all of his family, friends, and work colleagues would come to with almost any obscure question involving trivia, history, geography, or any other myriad of topics.

Share his knowledge not in a pretentious way, but in a way that was fun and engaging

His Passing

Morning that he passed away

Pleasantly reminded of the third quality

His sense of humor

Alex passed away at home in his hospital bed

My mom was sitting next to him quietly saying her final words to him.

It was just her and me alone in the house, and my sister was dialed in with us on speakerphone

I took it upon myself to finally turn off that oxygen machine, which had been on non stop for months. Ruining all of his audio tracks

The Humor in His Passing

Monday morning in Auburndale brings a sound
Trash and recycling trucks

So as my mom is having this deep moment with my dad after he passed...

the loudest clang of the recycle trucks I've ever heard comes through.

Some would say it spoiled the moment

But to me it made it a perfect Alex McNeil moment because he would have found that funny

It was as if he was saying, alright the show has ended, just rolling me outside into the blue trash can and let's get this show on the road.

Gift of finding humor in unexpected places

Closeout

Spirit of keeping things moving along

I'd like to introduce the main act here.

We have 15 speakers across key areas of my dad's life. Begin at my dad's days in Swarthmore, with his dear friend **Sandy Irving**

Sandy Irving

Jill tells me that according to Alex I have between 2 and 2.5 minutes.

And my remarks must be in the form of a question. But seriously ...

[Time limits ... Alex, if you're listening, the time to think of this was before you decided to be a wonderful person and lead a full and fascinating life. It's *too late now*.]

In the summer of 1960, I moved to Swarthmore, Pennsylvania, and I first met Alex when I entered 7th grade in the fall. From then on we were close, nerdy friends.

The early 60's were a transitional time. The tail end of the 50's, really. We had the Beach Boys, Motown, the British Invasion. But also Elvis, Little Richard, Chuck Berry, Roy Orbison, and American Bandstand.

We still labored under the delusion that Shakespeare was Shakespeare. Jeopardy was just another daytime NBC game show.

Alex was born to ace high school. And not as a jock. He was on the Scott's Hi-Q team, the yearbook, student government, and he ran the scoreboard for home basketball games.

Alex was popular. With all the cliques. Sometimes he drove to school and at lunch ferried cafeteria fugitives to Scotty's, a local McDonald's clone.

Of course, he had his trademark dry wit.

And this ... imperturbable cool. In a band imaginatively called "The Combo," he was the ultimate bass player, punching out the bass line for "Shotgun" while apparently planning dinner.

He had started his record collection. He idolized The Ventures. Together we perused the WIBG Radio Top 99.

His favorite song was "*To Know Him is to Love Him*," by the Teddy Bears. Mine was "*You Really Got Me*," by The Kinks. (I mention that because it's the only time I clearly did better.)

[We spent a lot of time trying to decipher Rolling Stones lyrics, a common pastime memorialized by Whoopi Goldberg in the movie "*Sister Act*." I remember trying to convince Alex that a line from Gimme Shelter -- "Burns like a red coal carpet" -- was "Birds like the wren go gobbling." Alex didn't buy it.

Alex was not what you'd call an athlete, but we did flail away at tennis balls, and we played a frisbee game of our own devise that consisted of hurling a frisbee at each other from either side of a field, trying to make the other guy drop it. Ultimate Frisbee had not yet made it's way to

Swarthmore. I can picture Alex setting his long limbs in motion with a little hop, and galloping off after a retreating disc.

Alex and I shared a hobby that he had been doing called "DXing," which involved listening for snippets of faraway AM radio stations and mailing the station for a "QSL" postcard if it was verified. It's an odd feeling that with Alex gone, I am the only one, really, who remembers those soft evenings, tweaking the lighted dial of old tube radio, when the atmospheric layers would shift; the clear-channel stations would boom out – WGN Chicago, WSL New Orleans, KDKA Pittsburgh, WBZ Boston – and faint signals would come skipping in and out of the static.

One afternoon, several of us were sitting around a table in physics lab, bored, and we decided to adopt nicknames based on teachers' last names. Mine was Groff, the physics teacher. Jill, among others, still calls me that.

Alex's may have been Cox. Mr. Cox was one of the guidance counselors. One time, after we'd taken an aptitude test, the counselors called me in and asked, "Sandy, have you ever considered becoming the governor of a state?" (??) ("Well, comptroller. *Maybe*. But I didn't think I could get into *governor* school.")

Alex loved to retell that story, which tells you a lot about his sense of humor.]

There were –

- long summer afternoons at the pool playing Marco Polo and hearts
- vanilla phosphates at the soda fountain
- competitive frisbee hurling
- AM-radio DXing (Google it)
- And a rare bottle of Moxie soda that Alex somehow procured (which tasted like Dr Pepper).

After senior year, Alex was dubbed "Class President for Life" as a joke. But it was true.

He and Jill treasured that time and those friends, and over the decades, he maintained a detailed class contact list. He put together great reunion bands.

And on the last full day of his life, from his bed, Alex chaired the biweekly Zoom meeting of the 60th-Reunion Planning Committee.

It was on his list.

There will be no new Class President for Life. The position is unfillable. It's taken.

And I count myself deeply privileged to have known Alex as a friend for 66 years.

Ralph Dawson [Unable to attend. His words were read by Sandy Irving:]

ALEX, A TRUE FRIEND

A couple of weeks ago, a giant of man left the planet.

Alex had the ability to transcend the cultural barriers that continues to divide so many in our country today.

From the moment I met him, I knew that he was an exceptional human being.

He was exceptionally bright, like many at Yale, but he also had exceptional emotional intelligence and maturity that enabled him to fit well and emerge as a quiet but effective leader, among all kinds of people.

Alex and I connected initially through music, first and foremost through African American rhythm and blues, for which he had developed encyclopedic knowledge growing up in the Philadelphia area. I was shocked that he was as knowledgeable about R&B and the performers of that music as was I. This was fascinating to me because frankly, having grown up in the segregated South, I had never really interacted socially with White Americans, and Alex became my first White friend.

I found out that he not only liked Black music, but he liked the same white musicians which I had come to like. That shared love of Music led to an exploration of all aspects of life, and to our surprise, we found that we fundamentally had a shared view of the important things in life — which I think shocked both us.

Those shared views led to the development of a lifelong friendship which we shared with the other members of our band which he called the Plastic Visitation, but in my own stubborn way, I called simply, the Visitation.

While we went our separate ways after college, the band would reconvene from time to time to play college reunions, or just to hang out at Doug Leonard's in Ct., at Rick Blum's in Pennsylvania, or in Rhode Island at Chuck Boisseau's (who joined our band in later years.)

But on those occasions, and on many more, Alex and I kept in touch to act as sounding boards for each other on the varying challenges of life.

We also got to act on a shared "Bucket List." We had long talked about paying a joint visit to what we both consider the Mecca of the music that we loved - a trip to the founding place of Motown Records in Detroit - to the shrine that Berry Gordy, Jr. named "Hitsville USA." Last fall, Alex and I, and our wives Jill and Leslie, met in Detroit and spent a day at Hitsville. We walked in the same rooms that Gordy converted to studios where Motown Records cranked out what became "*The Soundtrack of our lives*".

And what a life it has been to have Alex as a Friend. As a Christian, I believe that at some time in the future, Alex and I will get to make music together again. But in the meantime, Jill, their children, other family members, and all his friends, will be comforted by our memories of the times well spent with Alex.

In closing I paraphrase one of the songs that Alex loved to play the most – "*Alex, we all love you, and will miss you, more than you'll ever know.*"

By Ralph Dawson, July 28, 2026

Gregg Watkins

I'm Gregg Watkins. I first met Alex when we were freshmen in college. Another classmate of ours, Bob Camargo, told me he had to introduce me to this guy..."He knows everything!" Alex and I ended up rooming together junior and senior years. I was surprised to discover our double dorm room came with its own Housemother, but I quickly learned to like, respect, and obey Officer Jill.

I am here today to mourn our great mutual loss. It comes, first, as a shock, as if a huge hole had opened under our feet and we had fallen into it. Then, day by day, as we look for Alex and he is not there, comes the feeling of diminishment: we are now less than we were.

What are we to do? Of course, we know the answer. We are to remember the gifts Alex has given us, carry them within ourselves, and transmit them to others, such as:

- Alex's gracious patience. Despite his wonderful intellect, he did not demean others, talk down to them, contradict them or interrupt them.
- Alex's fairness of mind, his empathy and openness to consider others' positions in an unbiased way.
- And, perhaps most significantly, Alex's independence of thought and judgment and willingness to allow it to lead him to unconventional action in both small and great things. He invented his own career and defined its standard. He taught classical literature to the imprisoned. He crossed cultural barriers. Even when searching for a island beach vacation spot, he rejected the popular choices and found an offbeat paradise in Anguilla, although I admit he allowed me to talk him out of Devil's Island.not really.

I could go on but we have already been given a very tough assignment. It is a worthy one, however, from which much good can come ...to Alex's everlasting credit and legacy.

Still, for us there will be the loss, the hole that has opened up. What kind of hole? To me, it is best described, as Alex taught us, by the words of the 17th Earl of Oxford: "Tis not so deep as a well, nor so wide as a church door, but tis enough. It will serve."

David Poppel

I put my notes on these 3 by 5 index cards in solidarity with Brother Alex—the way we did when we wrote our term papers back in the day—the way Alex assembled his materials for his massive book “Total Television.”

Sixty years ago, 1,000 young men gathered in New Haven. I was one of them—a bit lost as I confronted such a strange, new world—first generation college student from a small town public high school. I knew no one. Had no friends until I met Alex and a bunch of other guys, some of whom are here with us today.

I liked Alex immediately. He was clever, intellectually energetic, insightful, calm and assured, always considerate and supportive and never negative, never one to try to one-up me and always ready to laugh. We shared a skeptical view of the crazy world around us. I would make him laugh. He would make me laugh. My laugh was often a Whitmanesque YAWP, his more a Cheshire Cat, close to the chest chuckle.

We shared a bunk bed sophomore year. Desks side by side, we worked our way through the academics. Late night trips to refill our tanks at the ‘Za House or The Doodle. Talking about music. Seeing Cream at Woolsey Hall. Trips to New York City or New Jersey. I wrote for the Yale Daily News. Alex had the Plastic Visitation. I struggled with my search for the path I was meant to follow going forward, Alex seemed much more assured of the way ahead. I struggled to engage with the “opposite sex.” Alex had Jill. And Jill brought so much light into that rather dark monastic place.

Most memories of those so-called happy, golden bygone days are a bit hazy now, but one I do remember quite clearly and shared with Alex when we last spoke only several days before he passed. He told me, early in our friendship, that the more one learned about a subject of interest, the more one would enjoy that subject and the more one would want to go even deeper. Alex certainly lived by that—the world of television we all grew up with. the Shakespeare authorship controversy, the music of our times.

Oh, he loved that old time rock and roll music. It was deep down in his soul. He loved the occasional silliness and the innuendo of it—Charlie Brown—he’s a clown. Louie, Louie...oh, baby! And away I go. He loved the poetry, the melody and the rhythm of it—the doo-wop, doo-wopness of it—that bass line. He loved the questioning and the philosophy of it—remember what the Dormouse said! But most of all, he loved the many ways the music expressed the glory of love—to know, know, know him, is to love, love, love him.

Someone once said, “A good friend is hard to find. Harder to lose. And impossible to forget.”

Alex, thanks for being my good friend. I love you. I will miss you. I will never forget you.

Paula Snyder

Good Morning. My name is Paula Snyder and on behalf of myself and Nancy Foley who is unable to be here, we offer these words of remembrance and our great affection for Alex.

Standing here now, it is almost impossible to think back to 1973 when Alex, Nancy and I were young work colleagues at the Appeals Court where we began a friendship which was very special and enduring. For over 50 years Alex has been our glue, our big brain and our sounding board.

At work we were a team. Because the Court was newly created in 1972, it had no traditions or a blueprint for operations. There was always so much to decide and to do, and Alex was at the center of it all. We were able to discuss ideas with him knowing that there would be no judgment, just thoughtful consideration and helpful alternatives.

Alex had a calm demeanor, high intelligence and a gentle disposition which allowed him to work in harmony with the judges as well as all members of the staff. He had a wonderful sense of humor. Everyone was fond of him. He was a steady presence and a natural administrator. He disliked drama, but there was never a time when he was unwilling to listen to a complaint or a proposal. He was an amazing listener. He had a way of calming people, not by fixing everything, but by being fully present. We believe he was largely responsible for the synergy of the place. It was a good place to work and grow.

But it wasn't just work. We enjoyed other things together. One time Alex organized a road trip to Worcester on a rented bus to hear a concert. We arrived at an older theatre and discovered immediately that our feet stuck to the floor. It didn't matter because the great rock musician Roy Orbison was directly in front of us, and his performance was amazing.

Alex's life was a kaleidoscope. The brightest color was his family, especially his wife JILL whom he cherished, their 2 children Joanna and Jeff and their grandchildren. Every Christmas we look forward to receiving the McNeil family photo card.

Some other highlights: Alex wrote a book called TOTAL TELEVISION: A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO PROGRAMMING FROM 1948 to 1980. He was a winning contestant on the TV show Jeopardy.

Alex was active in the Shakespeare Oxford Society. He once led us into an intriguing web of Shakespearean controversy. It was impossible to debate him in that arena as he knew every detail from every angle.

For many years Alex hosted a radio show on WMBR in Cambridge. His show was called Lost and Found and the playlist was music from the 1960s and 1970s. He once took us to the radio booth while he was broadcasting.

He and Jill and some friends had a band which performed at local venues and parties. Alex played the guitar and Jill and others sang. They were fun and popular.

In true Alex form, he asked that speakers keep their remarks brief so I will close by saying that Nancy and I feel privileged to call Alex a special, close friend whom we will miss greatly but who will remain in our hearts.

Dan Thurler

In what seems now a faraway time, actually, 1973, Alex and I came to work at the Appeals Court as law clerks for Chief Justice Hale. We discovered that we had some things in common. We both had played bass guitar in bands in college and managed those bands to some success. Alex knew a lot about music but it soon became apparent that he knew just as much about television. He had been collecting information on TV shows seemingly from birth and, with his incredible memory, was compiling, in his spare time, what would become, from its first edition in 1980 through several subsequent editions, the definitive reference work on classic television and a perfect companion for your TV. If you don't have a copy of *Total Television*, you owe it to yourself to go get one!

As our clerkships ended, Alex and I transitioned to longer term positions at the court. Alex soon became Court Administrator, assisting Chief Hale in managing the court. That included scheduling cases for oral argument and helping the judges select their law clerks, who were then stationed in the Appeals Court's new library on the fifteenth floor of the Highrise. One morning, just before lunch, Alex came into the library and, totally out of the blue, challenged the clerks to name all fifty States and their State capitals in alphabetical order. There was complete silence, and for a moment it seemed that the clerks might interpret this challenge as an invitation to a fire drill. But then one brave soul called out "Alabama, Montgomery," and for the next half hour they went at it with not a little coaching from Alex. No grievances were filed. Alex would go on to host a number of popular trivia sessions at the court.

Chief Hale was an avid sailor and every summer we were invited to join him and his then current clerks for a vacation day sailing on his boat, the "Altair." The crew of four learned the ropes and tried to avoid the rocks. Alex and I would drive down to the Cape together and one year he asked if I had ever heard that the Earl of Oxford, a contemporary of Shakespeare, might be the true author of the plays and poems. Alex had become an "Oxfordian," joining a respected segment of academia in arguing a strong circumstantial case for Oxford's authorship. Alex went on to prominence in that cause and at one point treated court judges and staff to an impressive presentation in the Armstrong Courtroom.

As the years went by, Alex also maintained his interest in music, organizing a local band, hosting a weekly radio show on WMBR, and of course continuing to collect records. When Jordan Marsh was still the big department store downtown, it maintained a great record department in a somewhat out of the way, but spacious, "Annex" adjacent to the main store on Washington Street. There resided a surprisingly large inventory of LPs that would periodically go on sale for what seemed, even then, the ridiculously low price of a little over \$2. On these sale days, we would sometimes go down with our wish lists and scour the racks at lunch time. On one such occasion I remember coming out of the Annex with Alex, who had been especially successful in finding treasures that day. As we came out through the doors onto Washington Street, he let out an uncharacteristically exuberant "Exhilarating!" Several people turned around, their startled looks asking what the heck could be going on in the Jordan Marsh Annex.

Alex's counsel and especially his friendship have been invaluable to me. I will miss him greatly.

Angelynn Grant

Hi, my name is Angelynn Grant and I host Coffeetime on WMBR. In the summer of 2006, I moved my show from Tuesdays to the Friday time slot following Alex's Lost & Found. In those two decades that Alex and I were time slot mates, he became a good friend. Since COVID, I think we both missed all the chats we'd have as his show ended and mine began. We went out of different control rooms and when I would get to the station, I would always poke my head into his room and say, "What was that song you played?" Or "gosh I LOVE that song." And, once my show had begun, he would pop into **my** control room to talk about music, station business or, my favorite, show me photos of the grandkids and tell me what sweet, funny things they'd said.

There has been an outpouring of appreciation for Alex from the WMBR family and also from listeners. When WMBR's Chuck Rosina, who's here today, did a tribute to Alex on the Friday Lost & Found two weeks ago, a listener texted, "Alex combined an encyclopedic knowledge of music with delightful good taste in his playlists. He could come up with whimsical themes for a show and then fill two hours with a combination of familiar and obscure songs that sounded great." And, last week, when deejay Jake Kassen, who's also here, hosted Alex's **other** show "88 Rewound" another listener texted, "I learned so much from his shows and our many text exchanges over the years. His time capsule approach to 88 Rewound really made it distinctive. Not just oldies but true cultural history." And Jake emailed this to me, "Alex was a time traveler. For two hours on Saturday, he transported us back to the 1960s to listen to the radio as it would have been broadcast, placing the songs in their historical context. It was unique, captivating radio." And our fellow deejay Larry Azrin wrote this apt reflection on Alex just the other day: "He always greeted me warmly **and** possessed a sly, understated sense of humor that could easily catch me off guard with a quick zinger."

Whenever I told Alex I loved a particular musician or song, he never forgot. We shared a love for Jackie DeShannon and, when he got to interview her, he asked her to autograph her new album for me. In 2007, I told him that hearing the theme song to the TV show "Room 222" on his Lost & Found had filled me with a soothing joy. Seven years later he remembered this and played it again when he filled in on my show. He knew how much I adored Lulu and, in 2017, he told me she was going to appear in the greater Boston area. I was reluctant to drive all the way to Shirley, Mass, but Alex strongly encouraged me and it was the most amazing show. These are very specific anecdotes, but so indicative of how considerate a friend Alex was.

Alex made a big impact at the radio station, both behind the scenes and over the air. He was a great deejay, a good friend, and an all-around great guy.

So thank you, dear Alex.

Rick Roth

I'm Rick Roth, one of the station managers of WMBR. I'm not sure why he chose me to speak as you see I'm using my phone, not 3 x 5 index cards. I don't usually tell people, but I went to Harvard Divinity School, if he knew he must have been worried I might go over the 2 and a half minutes. And I'm also surprised because I have a "Kill Your Television" bumper sticker on my van.

The perfect pop single from the Billboard top 100 from the 60's runs on average about two minutes and thirty-five seconds. Alex would have known, but I had to look it up.

Knowing Alex, he would have checked my timing, but nobody here is as exact as he would be, so I might risk going long for a minute or so.

My first thought was to honor him maybe like his show 88 rewind, with a countdown. The Top 100 Reasons We Loved and Admired Alex McNeil. I had to abandon that concept. There were far too many bubbling under reasons.

I dreamed that Alex Trebek was replaced by Alex McNeil and that a big board of categories all Alex came up. The category is Alex McNeil and these are some of the jeopardy answers: For \$100 "Won a round of Jeopardy" For \$200 "Was beaten at Jeopardy by a sewage engineer" — for \$300. "Shakespeare's ummmmm.... greatest admirer" and for the daily double "This music lover and wonderfully obsessive completist had a recording of every single Billboard top 100 for the entire 60's" Every answer, all the way down the board would be in the obligatory Jeopardy form of a question, "Who was Alex McNeil?"

I once had a perfect music moment with Alex. He and I and Doug Gesler went to see the Byrds and Marty Stuart perform Sweetheart of the Rodeo. It was so great to be with two guys who knew so much about it and loved the music and had a deep appreciation, a great musical moment.

When Alex had just entered hospice care at home, I wrote him a letter and here it is: "Alex — I don't think it's any exaggeration to say that you are a huge reason I am still at WMBR. Your example — always doing the station's work, hard work, and never letting the difficulties of the community get to you — was a great one. Your perspective, and the humor and wit with which you delivered it, tempered my frustrations more times than I can count. Your love of music, and your expansive knowledge of music, have inspired not just me but countless station

members and even more listeners. I can't tell you how many times I've found a wonderful piece of music I was sure was obscure to everyone — only to discover you had already played it. I believe that music is love. I hope music can carry you beyond time and space. Peace and love, brother. Peace and love."

I asked him once to name his favorite song and to my surprise he answered, "my favorite song is Patsy Cline's "When You Need a Laugh" — there's a little catch in her voice at the very end that gets me every time."

There is a hole in our hearts, music and good memories and friendship and love and laughter will fill it.

When you hear something great you never heard before, think of Alex and be like him, share it.

Bob Heckart

I met Alex on Freshmen Move in Day at Yale in the fall of 1966 and that same day we became friends for the next 60 years. He holds a very special place in my heart.

Alex was one of those rare people whom you instantly like and just keep liking more and more over time. He had a quick smile that lit up his face and an easy laugh. I never saw him angry or even overly perturbed. He was an integral part of whatever was going on, and great company to be with.

I have many wonderful memories with Alex, especially during our Yale years when we were roommates or close neighbors. Coming from a small farming community in Missouri to Yale was a seismic shift in worlds for me, and Alex was my anchor in the far different world of cosmopolitan Yale. In large and small ways he was a defining and wonderful part of my life-changing Bright College Years. *Boola Boola!*

One of my first memories of Alex is on that Move In Day when we found a real prize at the Yale student furniture exchange - a modern black Naugahyde sofa in remarkably good shape -- or so we thought. As we proudly carried it back into our freshmen dorm, Alex's mother and mine were watching us and crying silently together. We thought they were already missing us from their nests, but we learned later they were just distraught at the thought of us living with that sofa for the next school year.

That fall, Alex invited me to his home in Swarthmore for Thanksgiving to share the holiday with his family. New Haven was a long way from my home, and his kindness meant the world to me. That kindness was a defining part of his character and something I have always admired.

During our years at Yale, I spent many pleasant hours: losing to Alex and Jill at bridge; attending football games with our thermos bottles full of whiskey sours; and listening to Alex play guitar with the Plastic Visitation. Although perhaps least widely known for his athletic prowess, he was the first choice as a partner in the random doubles frisbee matches in the Trumbull College courtyard. It was a great time in our lives.

Alex and I shared Room 1156 with Dave Poppel and Doug Thompson our sophomore year. We four Roommates Forever took separate paths after graduation, but with wives Jill, Deb and Gail we got together in 2001 for the first annual 1156 Trumbull College weekend reunion. Additional close Trumbull friends of ours soon joined us in developing this tradition. These weekends were magical for me. From one to the next, none of us aged a day and all our Yale memories were happily relived – to varying degrees of accuracy – each time.

Talking with Alex about anything was always easy, educational and entertaining. He was an expert in all areas of interest to him and remained ever-curious and engaged with a subject even after

mastering it – especially music, trivia, television and Shakespeare. Luckily for so many of us, Alex also believed in sharing what he loved doing with others. And now we know the 17th Earl of Oxford actually wrote the plays widely attributed to the Bard of Avon – *Right?*!

Alex, I miss you and your friendship very much. I so wish we had been able to embark on our epic National Parks roadtrip emulating Martin Milner and George Maharis with their Corvette in the *Route 66* tv series¹. I will keep looking for the white buffalo², and raising a glass of our favorite Anguillan rum³ in honor of you, your friendship and your life well-lived.

¹ Martin Milner, who played Tod Stiles, and George Maharis, who portrayed Buz Murdock, in the series, which aired from 1960 to 1964 and in which they drove a white 1965 Corvette convertible.

² The white buffalo saved Rusty from a stampeding herd of buffalo in episode 6 of season 2 of *The Adventures of Rin Tin Tin* originally aired on October 14, 1955. Many Plains tribes regard the white buffalo as a sacred sign associated with hope, renewal or divine intervention.

³ Pyrat.

Cheryl Eagan-Donovan

It is an honor to share a few thoughts about Alex's work as a Shakespeare scholar and Oxfordian. I'll try to keep my remarks under 3 minutes like a good rock and roll song. I knew Alex as a DJ at WMBR – we listened to his Friday afternoon show *Lost & Found* every week – when I ran into him on a flight to Ashland, Oregon for my first Shakespeare Authorship conference in 2005. He had brought with him a 2x4 piece of lumber with lightbulbs and wires attached to it. I don't know how he got through security with it! It was for the Oxfordian Jeopardy game he would host at the conference, a favorite event where attendees tested their knowledge against his vast expertise on every play and poem, every fact about the Seventeenth Earl of Oxford, Edward de Vere, every myth about Shakespeare, and every aspect of Elizabethan history. It's a perfect example of Alex's ability to make an esoteric, complex subject fun. I tried playing a few years ago in Denver and failed miserably!

From that time forward, I had the great pleasure of working with him as a member of the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship. On behalf of all my colleagues there, I can say that he was a true friend, a very generous mentor, and a brilliant collaborator. I served with him on the Oxfordian of the Year Selection Committee, an award he received in 2014. He was also chosen to present the same award to Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens in 2009. He served as the Membership Committee Chair, the long-time editor of two newsletters, *Shakespeare Matters* and the *Shakespeare Oxford News*, and on several other committees including Finance and Nominations. He was always the voice of reason, lending his legal acumen and his ability to articulate the essence of whatever crucial decision we were considering. He was tactful, respectful, and always gracious. His energy and dedication to the organization, often behind the scenes, was boundless. He did more to contribute to the recognition of the authorship question and the life and work of Edward de Vere than any other member of the SOF. In addition to his own published work, he assisted many other authors in fact checking, revising, and editing their projects.

I was the beneficiary of that help when he very politely pointed out a few errors in my film, *Nothing Is Truer than Truth*, in which he appears and offers an eloquent explanation of what makes Edward de Vere as Shakespeare totally unique and entirely viable. He says, "Shakespeare was doing something new. He was experimenting with new forms of drama and he was experimenting with something even more profound, putting his own story into his works". It was a wonderful experience to return to Ashland in 2010 and interview him for my film.

We also worked together on his *Authorship 101* video which has been viewed by over 60,000 people. In it, he explains the reasons for the doubts about that Stratford man, and the arguments for Edward de Vere as the author of the canon, in a way that is straightforward, accessible, and compelling. He was honored with the Tom Regnier Veritas Award in 2023 for that accomplishment.

We shared a love of Shakespeare and music, and I cherish the memories of seeing his band playing on Winchester Common and attending his Woodstock party in his backyard. Thanks to everyone at WMBR for all the tribute shows that kept us connected to Alex every day over these past two weeks. Above all else, Alex was, not unlike Edward de Vere, a quick wit with a depth and breadth of knowledge to match Shakespeare's – a true Renaissance man. Dear Alex, thank you for inspiring us all to live life to the fullest and always to strive for excellence. "If music be the food of love, play on."

Ed Englander

Jill, Joanna, Jeff, Stephanie, extended family, Alex's colleagues, friends and neighbors:

I have been asked to speak about our wonderful neighborhood.

Alexander McNeil made the Islington Peninsula a better place to live – the Peninsula is surrounded by water, with a large field as one enters the community - we call the field The Oval.

When our family first moved into the neighborhood there was a Labor Day picnic where families gather at the Oval. Someone asked me, "Have you thought of what you will be for Halloween." And I thought – Wow! – these folks are serious.

We went to the party. There was a neighborhood band with lots of talented neighbors singing.

The next year I was approached by Alex and asked to sing. I told Alex, I can't remember words, I can't carry a tune, and I don't have rhythm. So, Alex found a song for me – where the title to the song are **all the words** "Bird, Bird, Bird is the Word".

Most laughed with me, some laughed at me, and best of all Alex loved it. After that, every year Alex found a song for me and somehow every year my neighbors cheer me on and cemented the feeling that I too belong.

That's what Alex did – he made everyone feel they belonged.

Alex and Jill supplied the glue and were the catalyst that made our community stronger, and everyone feel part of.

They created a neighborhood directory and website.

We had a Woodstock Party, and

A Millennium New Year's Eve Party, a party once in a thousand years.

Alex was on Jeopardy – so they created a Jeopardy Party.

Marty Sender, a neighbor, who always came to the Halloween Party dressed in drag, died suddenly. So, six months later Alex and Jill organized the Marty Sender Gender Bender Ball – where everyone was required to come in drag.

And who was the clear knockout – Alex – he looked amazing – I am talking really hot.

In 2008 – the community responded. We held a surprise party to honor Alex and Jill and their contributions. We created a Proclamation declaring each of them Knights of the Oval.

My life and my family's lives have been enriched by Alex and the community he helped create.

I know that Alex's memory will always be a blessing for me.

May his memory be a blessing for each of you.

Chuck Boisseau

Hi. I'm Chuck Boisseau. Alex was my friend and bandmate for over 30 years. My wife Jan and I have so many wonderful memories of our times with Alex and Jill at their house, dining out, going to concerts and long talks that sometimes touched on the philosophic or spiritual. A great friend and brilliant man, but with a light touch and wry sense of humor. But I'm going to talk about Alex my bandmate.

I was drafted into his old college band, the Plastic Visitation in the early 1990s, first, to play these fabulous keg parties at the home of our mutual friend, Doug Leonard, who was also drummer for the PV. It was there that I met Ralph Dawson, whose tribute I have just read to you. These parties were all night affairs with exuberant music of all styles, multiple singers, including Jill, other spouses, great food and, did I mention, limitless beer? We all have fantastic, albeit hazy, memories of those summer nights in Brooklyn, Connecticut.

A couple years later, PV started playing the Yale reunions for Doug's and Alex's classes. These were more structured than the parties at the Leonard's, but no less joyful and I'm here to testify that when the Yale class of '69 and '70 grads got together they were there to party, I mean, everyone was on the dance floor.

Still later, I started playing with Alex and Jill in their band, Flashback, which eventually morphed into Backburner, the remains of which, Dana, Scott, Bud and Mel, played for you this morning as you were coming in. In addition to playing various area gigs, the band and Auburndale neighborhood organized a Halloween costume party each year. Neighbors got up to sing, mimicking every conceivable rocker from Linda Ronstadt to the Ronettes and Johnny Cash to John Lennon. Each party would be followed with an awards ceremony, basically for the most outrageous costumes, on-stage antics and tone deaf or rhythm impaired performance.

At the center, leading all this joy was Alex. An excellent bass player with a great memory for song structure and real heart for the music. Alex was also the quiet but firm hand organizing the events, setting up the PA, running the rehearsals, and often, choosing songs. Alex loved the obscure and esoteric. How many among you know, If I Needed Someone, Last Train to Jacksonville, Waterloo Sunset or When My Baby's Beside Me? Alex did. He had an encyclopedic knowledge of pop music from the 60s and was determined to bring overlooked gems to light.

There many more good and fine things to be said about Alex and you have heard or will hear these from others that knew this multi-talented man from different perspectives, but I hope I've given you an idea of the happiness he brought to all the people he performed for and played with. I am so grateful for these years being a part of Alex's and Jill's band and their lives. While I am immensely sad that we have lost his corporeal being, Alex lives on in me and, I expect, in you too. Like Ralph Dawson, as a Christian, I hope someday to play in Alex's band again. Until then, Alex, my friend, travel joyfully.

Mel Gluskin

[Mel ad-libbed here, "Siri, time two and a half minutes!"]

There is a German word that migrated to Yiddish and then crossed the Atlantic to become part of the American vernacular. That word is *Mench*, m e n c h.

In German it simply means a person, a human being but in the current context it connotes the pinnacle of personhood, one who possesses the most admirable of human qualities: compassion, kindness, wisdom, and, oh yes, humility. Alex exemplified all of these and so much more.

In the movie “Little Big Man” Dustin Hoffman said his native American tribe called themselves the Human Beings. He said their white oppressors did not know where the center of the Earth was. Alex knew the center was family.

His childhood soulmate, Jill, his two kids, Jeff, Joanna, Jeff’s wife Stephanie, and enough grandkidlets to populate several professional sports teams.

Alex excelled in too many areas to list here, but after family I’d like to think that music was right up there. He was an accomplished bassist.

For over 40 yrs it was my great honor to share musical adventures with Alex and Jill. I am eternally grateful for their nurturing of my delusions of rock-n-roll grandeur.

When I first met Alex I did not think we would be good friends. I sensed a deficiency of existential angst, and he did not appreciate my feeble attempts at irony and satire. This changed when he insisted on driving me to Worcester to retrieve my stolen Toyota. I thought it odd when he proudly showed me his complete collection of TV Guides, but when he presented me with a copy of his bathroom literary classic *Total Television* it all made perfect sense. With the explosion of cable TV, Alex said he was relieved to be out of the TV cataloguing business.

On a recent visit I noticed on a shelf above his hospital bed his bass and what looked like a police lineup of worn stuffed animals. Jill explained that at age 6 Alex created a graphic series featuring these characters with detailed charts and sports stats ... who would have thunk it?

His mind was like nobody’s business—a vast repository of facts great and small. For example, he was my go-to guy whenever I had a pressing need to know the exact date and time of any impending Jewish holiday.

There is a lush chunk of dirt that juts into the Charles River: The Islington Peninsula. This is a unique musical oasis that has modeled itself after the Dr Seuss town of Whoville, because once a year on Halloween the residents like nothing better than dressing funny, swaying in a circle and singing silly songs. I like to think of the music as a community super glue. Alex and Jill were the catalysts.

It will be a challenge to carry on without Alex, but I am sure he would have wanted the silliness to continue.

In this age of digital this and AI that, there is no substitute for one-on-one human contact.

On occasion, when I played a guitar lick correctly, Alex would pat my shoulder, smile, and say “Well done Mel ... well done.”

That really meant so much to me.

I’d like to conclude by saying that though it may be naive, I take some comfort in the belief that on some greater cosmic level, to which we mere mortals are not privy , in the vast scheme of things ,,, all this craziness and suffering here on planet Earth somehow ..somewhere ..someway makes perfect sense.

Alex my friend, my mensch ... rest.. in .. peace.

Mary Rhodes

Good morning.

As a child, I'd hoped and hoped for a sibling but had to wait a long ten years until Alex was born. What a cute and darling kid he was— blond hair, sturdy build, and a sunny disposition. Quite soon, indications of Alex's uniqueness began to appear. As a preschooler, he memorized all of the species of birds in the Audubon guide, and soon also for no particular reason learned the bus routes in Washington DC, where we lived. When he was ten, the magazine our father edited suddenly closed, and our parents and he relocated to Swarthmore PA, while I moved into the dorm at GWU and remained in DC. Alex did well in school in the new area. He made friends—most importantly, at Swarthmore High School, Jill Spencer, the light of his life and his wife for 56 years.

Alex went on to major in history at Yale and graduate from Boston College Law School. Alex was a brilliant guy. He knew something about everything, had an incredible, and seemingly effortless, memory for all he read or heard, and had knowledge to contribute to most any conversation. He did crossword puzzles in pen.

In addition to his intellect, Alex had an unusually wide range of interests. For instance, from early on, he loved baseball, baseball cards, and sports statistics. He also had a large collection of stuffed animals. At age seven, he combined those two disparate interests by creating an imaginary world of different animal-based nations, all competing in baseball. He hand-wrote and illustrated a newspaper, **Beargo Sports**, each issue containing many articles about the games, players, their standings, classified ads, and even an occasional etiquette column. This hobby continued sporadically for ten years

Music: Alex learned to play the guitar early and greatly enjoyed being part of musical groups. He amassed a huge collection of records from past decades and hosted a weekly radio show for years, until very recently.

TV: In 1980, Alex wrote Total Television, a compendium of every daytime and primetime TV show from 1948-1980, tracking more than 3400 series.

Shakespeare authorship: The question of who actually wrote the works attributed to Shakespeare was intriguing to him., which led him to becoming active in the Oxfordian Society.

Naturally, someone with Alex's mind might be inspired to compete on **Jeopardy**. In January 1994, he came out to stay with me in southern California to tape the show. Suddenly the Northridge earthquake of 6.7 magnitude struck our area. Havoc ensued. Taping was canceled and rescheduled months later, with his episode finally airing in March 1995.

Genealogy. Both of our parents were highly interested in family history, a trait that Alex inherited. He researched and was intrigued by knowledge of our forebears.

Although Alex often wore (like me) the facial expression of a thin-lipped smile, and guffawed only rarely, he definitely had a marvelous sense of humor. Not a cutting wit, as he was a kind and sensitive soul, but so quick and clever in repartee.

It was important to Alex to keep up with his friends. Those relationships meant so very much to him.

And of course his devotion to his family was paramount. He found real joy when Joanna and then Jeff came along and was playful and devoted to them, as he was with each of his beloved grandchildren. He was very proud of his kin and descendants.

During what turned out to be our last phone call, we talked about how lucky we each are to have such a very caring and supportive family around.

My long-awaited baby brother bloomed into a phenomenal man: creative, kind, wise, ethical, learned, witty, talented, and loving. What good fortune to have had him in our lives.

Godspeed, Alex

Bill McNeil

Every family has its stories that we tell each other and pass on from generation with memories that thrive.

Our family was small but rich in history and deep in enduring love

When my family visited Alex's family in Washington DC, I was immensely impressed that Alex knew the entire metropolitan bus system . Mind you this was before the Metro, before computers or cellphones.

When Alex visited my family in upstate NY where we had a modest backyard, large enough for us to play catch, a little two-person baseball. At the time I was on a little league team. Just a few weeks ago Alex told me how much he delighted in playing in that back yard and how impressed he was with my baseball skills. In truth I was fairly mediocre , but Alex thought I could play for the Washington Senators.

During the Iranian hostage crisis, Alex started calling his father (my uncle) the Ayatollah. He inherited that droll sense of humor.

Alex pursued his many interests with a persistent passion. Among them he picked up the genealogical torch from his father and with meticulous research discovered that our McNeil family, our clan, did not hail from Barra but from a smaller place on the mainland. I will not challenge his finding, wearing the McNeil tartan proudly today, still appreciating Alex's diligent search for the truth.

My life, our lives are richer for Alex's presence on them, while he was embodied among us. Now we have more than enough memories to fill the Snow Catherine that brought McNeils to North America and still more to carry the next generations.