



# **Dr. Robert D. Pascotto**

NOV 16, 1940 - AUG 27, 2025



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## **Dr. Robert D. Pascotto**

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**O**n August 27<sup>th</sup>, 2025 surrounded by family, Dr. Robert Daniel Pascotto passed peacefully into God’s open arms. “Dr. Bob” believed in faith, family and the American dream. He dedicated his life to those tenets. With hard work and perseverance, he led compassionately by example and will continue to inspire others to achieve their dreams with his loving legacy.

Being born to Italian immigrants in New York during 1940 presented some challenges. Dante, Sarah and Bobby lived in a tenement building in the heart of New York City. Both of his parents worked multiple jobs to support the family. Dante and Sarah started saving money for their son’s medical school before he was even born. They pushed him to make something better of himself using education as the tool. Although there were many distractions in Manhattan at that time, Bobby stayed focused on putting in the effort to study even if that meant that he had to study in hollows of a cold bathtub to drown out the cacophony of the city. Dante and Sarah instilled in their son core values that would be his moral compass for life.

After graduating from Manhattan College, Bob attended Creighton University School of Medicine in Omaha, Nebraska. While traveling to the heartland was like taking a trip to a foreign county, Bob was grateful for the opportunity and help. Creighton University is a Jesuit institution, so that bode well with him as he knew that a Catholic education had supported him through his academic career thus far. Again, with God by his side, he left the Big Apple and his parents to prepare his mind to eventually heal thousands of hearts. Oddly enough, it was in Omaha where Bob first developed his love of the water. Learning how to waterski on Carter Lake was his initial dip into joys of being on and in the water.

After medical school, Dr. Bob was thrilled when he matched with St. Vincent’s Hospital back in NYC. Little did he know that it would be there where he would find his best pairing. Joni Marie Cleary, a beautiful, smart and feisty R.N., caught Dr. Bob’s eye. With her, they would start chapter one of their 57 year love story.



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Joan and Bob were married on May 18th, 1968. They worked as a team in everything that they did. From raising three children, Hon. Tara Pascotto Paluck, Dr. Robert Daniel Pascotto, Jr. and Lea Marie Pascotto MA/MA, to trolling for a fresh catch and seeking new opportunities, they worked together. With faith in God, they weathered turbulent and unexpected storms like the ravages of Bob's cancer journey and life after Ian — with the demolition of their only home they owned. Joan and Bob were able to reflect on all of the joys of their life together.

The impact of this “kid from 43rd St.” is vast and deep. After medical school, and thankfully with the Vietnam War slowing down, Dr. Bob moved his young family to Homestead Air Force Base where Dr. Bob was assigned and became a Major and Chief of General Surgery. In the warm waters off of Miami, Dr. Bob learned to fish. He bought his first boat. Again, his passion for the water was ignited.

After his time in the Air Force, Dr. Bob continued his training with a fellowship in cardiovascular and thoracic surgery. Dr. Bob became a pioneer of cardiac surgery in Southwest Florida in 1975. At that time, he initiated the cardiac surgery program for Lee and Collier counties with a team of surgeons, cardiologists, nurses and perfusionists. Prior to that time, cardiac surgery was only available in Tampa or Miami. The reputation of the program grew to what is considered to be the epitome of excellence nationally. During his career, Dr. Bob also became active on the state level and became the President of the Florida Society of Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgeons, and President of the Lee County Medical Society as well as serving on many notable boards.

Undeniably, Dr. Bob worked hard. With his skilled hands, he saved countless lives. Not only did the local community benefit from his labors, but he also founded and led a humanitarian mission group in the Dominican Republic. For over 20 years, Dr. Bob led the Heart to Heart Mission providing free open heart surgeries to over 425 patients. Without this intervention, these patients would not have been able to survive. His many accolades included the American Heart Association's Golden Heart Award that was subsequently named in honor of him which is now in perpetuity, Citizen of the Year from the Italian American Club, the 2006 Alumni Achievement Citation from Creighton University, and being knighted by the President of the Dominican Republic for his service in that country.

Unequivocally, Dr. Bob liked to inspire people. He would offer supportive words to reassure anyone that anything is possible. If he sensed that an individual had drive, grit, or determination, he encouraged that person to strive for excellence—to accomplish their dreams. He would



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counsel individuals from all walks of life to better themselves, and he would assist them in any capacity that he could. Not only was it lining people up with internships or jobs, but he also provided financial help. As a way of giving back, he donates to an endowed scholarship with Creighton University School of Medicine. He felt very grateful for the opportunity that Creighton gave him when offering him a seat in medical school.

Dr. Bob lived a life full of passion. He loved God. He loved his family. He was happy when Robert Jr. married Laura (Risch) and they gave him first grandchild, Adrian, 25, but they also gave him a grandson to carry the Pascotto name, Tyler, 22. Bob's daughter, Tara married, Ron Paluck. Their sons, Jack, 22, and Vinny, 20, both love the water as much as their grandfather did. Dr. Bob was very proud of all his grandchildren. Dr. Bob's favorite vacation was a family trip to Italy. Bob and Joan took their children and grandchildren on a trip of a lifetime. As he said, "you don't know where you're going, if you don't know where you've been". Dr. Bob loved his Italian heritage, culture and family. The memories made with his Italian cousins were part his fabric.

Dr. Robert Daniel Pascotto lived a life of service – service to God, his county, his community, and his family. His humanitarianism stretched to other countries. He healed hearts and inspired minds.

In that spirit, the family asks that instead of flowers, please make a donation to the Doctor Robert Pascotto Scholarship. This initiative is designed to support aspiring medical professionals dedicated to cardiac surgery by encouraging participation in mission trips and fostering a culture of philanthropy healthcare. Please go <https://tohttps://iperfusion.org/robert-d-pascotto-mission-scholarship/> to donate.

A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated on Saturday, September 6th, 2025, at 11:00 a.m. at the Church of the Resurrection of Our Lord, 8121 Cypress Lake Dr., Fort Myers, FL 33919 and will be streamed on YouTube and recorded on <https://iperfusion.org/a-tribute-to-dr-robert-pascotto-md/>




# Events


**Dr. Robert D. Pascotto**

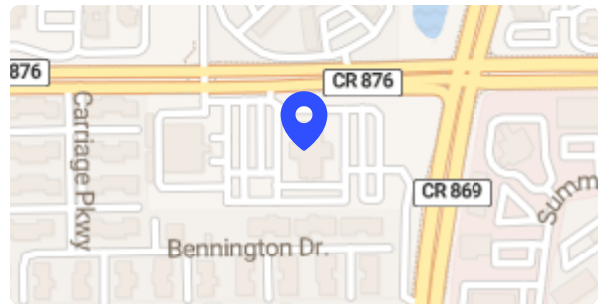
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## Mass of Christian Burial


 **Saturday**, September 6, 2025

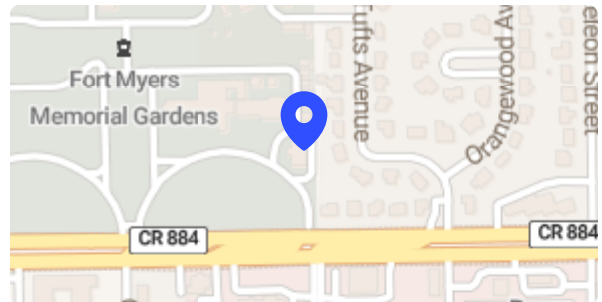
 11:00 AM ET

 **Church of the Resurrection of Our Lord**  
8121 Cypress Lake Drive, Fort Myers FL 33919



## Cemetery Details

 **Fort Myers Memorial Gardens Cemetery**  
1589 Colonial Boulevard, Fort Myers FL 33907





## Tribute Wall

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**Stan Briggs** posted:

It is with deep sadness to hear of the passing of Dr. Pascotto. He was a man of faith, of honor, and love for his family, his patients and colleagues. I had the privilege to be one of the original perfusionists at Fort Myers Community Hospital when we did our first cardiac case in 1975. Along with his partner, Dr. Michael Steier, we built a program respected on the west coast of Florida even before I-75 was built south of Tampa. Joan was the life of a party, friends with everyone. Robert Jr. would talk to frogs outside his bedroom window while they called his name (Rrrrobert), Tara was the cutest little happy girl, and Lea spent the first week of her life outside of the hospital at our house while mom was recovering from birthing issues. Momma Pascotto was our son's first babysitter. Rest well my friend. Stan Briggs Waynesville, North Carolina

November 1 at 10:49 PM



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November 1 at 10:45 PM



**Wendy Pleva** posted:

I joined the open heart team in 1991 and had the privilege of working with dr. Pascotto. He was very kind and respectful to his patients. The depth of care was immeasurable. I recently moved to north carolina and am very grateful that I could watch the funeral service on utube. It was beautiful. Wendy pleva

September 6 at 12:17 PM



**Anonymous** sent an Emerald Garden Basket to the Pascotto family.



September 6 at 11:35 AM



## Tribute Wall

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**Anonymous** planted a Memorial Tree in honor of Robert.



September 6 at 11:35 AM



# Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Robert by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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