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**Notes from editor (not for publication):**

Lovely job, Rob. I still don't know about the excerpt, so I made the coattail a generic link to the book's website, at least for now.



HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

1 Sharing a brother's life and legacy

####END HED####

####BEGIN SUBHED####

2 With the help of a longtime family friend, a new book  
3 looks back on the sudden illness and death of Tim Fontaine, a  
4 former star athlete and entrepreneur from Bellows Falls

####END SUBHED####

5 TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

6 Tim Fontaine, a well-known and much-loved Bellows  
7 Falls athlete and business owner, died in 2004, just a few days  
8 after he turned 47, following a 10-month struggle with cancer.

9 Now, more than 20 years later, his brother, Thomas E.  
10 "Tommy" Fontaine, has just released a book, *My Journey: Brother*

11 *to Brother*, a very personal memoir of a very difficult period  
12 based on the journal he kept while he watched his brother fade  
13 and die.

14 Fontaine, now of Perkinsville, has been a teacher for over  
15 40 years and has written three other books of historical  
16 fiction. When asked about why he is publishing this memoir now,  
17 over 20 years after his brother has passed, Tommy says “I never  
18 intended to publish it. But several people encouraged me to  
19 reconsider.”

20 Now 62, and aware of his own mortality, Fontaine said  
21 he felt it was time to put the story out there — both to honor his  
22 brother’s life and to talk frankly about the dying and grieving  
23 process.

24 Since he first wrote it in 2004, Fontaine said, several  
25 people read the journal, and many of them encouraged him to  
26 publish it for a wider audience, feeling it had important things to  
27 say about those issues, as well as family, community, and  
28 brotherhood.

29 One of those readers was longtime family friend Tom  
30 Salmon, the former Vermont state auditor whose father, Thomas P.  
31 Salmon, served as governor from 1973 to 1977.

32 “I grew up with Tommy,” Salmon said. “We played  
33 basketball together and were teammates on the Jets Pee Wee  
34 football team. His brothers, Brian and Barry, were also on that  
35 team, and their father, Eugene, was one of our coaches.”

36 After graduating high school in Bellows Falls, Salmon  
37 and the Fontaines fell out of touch but reconnected a few years  
38 ago when Fontaine helped the Salmons with a major construction  
39 project.

40 During that time, Fontaine shared the manuscript with  
41 Salmon, who, in turn, shared it with his friend Ellen McSweeney.

42 “Ellen is a former colleague from the U.S. Department of  
43 Homeland Security,” Salmon said, describing her as “a sharp  
44 attorney, and an experienced editor.”

45 “Together, we began shaping the book into publishable  
46 form,” he continued. “Both of us were deeply moved by Tommy’s  
47 story, by his journey, and by Tim’s life and legacy. We agreed the  
48 book deserved a wider audience and should be celebrated  
49 throughout the Connecticut River Valley.”

## 50 **‘A humble, sincere, and decent** 51 **human being’**

52 Raw, sad, funny, angry, and filled with mixed emotions,  
53 the book is not an easy read, especially for anyone who knows  
54 the Fontaine family.

55 The brothers’ parents, Dottie Ann and Gene Fontaine,  
56 grew up in Bellows Falls, raised their family there, and lived there  
57 all their lives. Married for 50 years, they were very well-known in  
58 the community. Gene Fontaine served as the Windham Northeast  
59 Supervisory Union (WNESU) business manager for 26 years.

60 The book is a tribute to Tim Fontaine’s life, and includes  
61 insights from his wife, Caroline, and three daughters, as well as  
62 his sister, his three younger brothers, his parents, and many  
63 friends who rallied around him during his illness.

64 The story recounts his many accomplishments in life, in  
65 business, and in his community, and highlights a generous and  
66 warm nature.

67 “Tim was a gifted and skilled carpenter,” Salmon  
68 remembered. “But even more than that, he was a humble,  
69 sincere, and decent human being — truly one of the best I have  
70 ever known.”

71 The memoir is also very much the frank recollections of  
72 Fontaine’s personal struggles dealing with loss and grief while he  
73 watched his brother fiercely face a painful disease and death with  
74 courage and humor.

75 Fontaine adored his brother, who was seven years older.  
76 At 6’3” and 220 pounds, Tim was movie star handsome, an  
77 outstanding athlete in numerous sports, and easy to admire,

78 especially by a kid brother. Tim was a three-sport varsity athlete at  
79 Bellows Falls Union High School, playing baseball and basketball  
80 and quarterbacking the football team.

81 He went on to play football at Vermont Academy during  
82 a year in preparation for college and then played collegiate  
83 football for four years, quarterbacking his team at the University  
84 of Massachusetts at Amherst.

85 A serious kidney injury suffered in a game sidelined his  
86 athletic career.

87 Tim returned to his hometown of Bellows Falls and  
88 became an accomplished woodworker and carpenter, operating  
89 his own construction company and working maintenance in the  
90 school system.

91 All through this, Tommy looked up to his big brother as  
92 his hero and protector. Tim took Tommy under his wing and  
93 watched out for him. They did sports together. Tim taught Tommy  
94 carpentry. They shared a love of woodworking. Tommy would  
95 work for his older brother doing construction during his summer  
96 breaks from teaching.

97 That pattern continued until 2003 and Tim's diagnosis of  
98 cancer.

## 99 **A terminal diagnosis**

100 Salmon recalled Tim Fontaine working with him in 2003  
101 during home renovations at 7 Hapgood St.

102 During that project, Tim installed antique tin ceiling  
103 panels the Salmon family had removed from Meatland, a butcher  
104 shop they had owned at 46 Westminster St.

105 "I still remember him working in the bathroom off the  
106 kitchen, carefully putting those pieces in place, when he  
107 mentioned he was feeling dizzy," Salmon said. "Within days, he  
108 began undergoing medical tests and treatment."

109 Tim's family and friends were blindsided by the  
110 unmistakable diagnosis of terminal lung cancer. Tumors were

111 growing in Tim’s brain, and clots would soon develop in his  
112 lungs.

113 He would outlive the initial diagnosis of three to six  
114 months, but not by much. The ravages of cancer and radiation  
115 treatments would take their toll on Tim Fontaine’s once-athletic  
116 body, and he would die just 10 months after the initial diagnosis.

## 117 **‘I wrote it to heal, to** 118 **remember’**

119 Someone gave Tommy Fontaine a blank journal during  
120 this period, and he began to write. He recorded events and  
121 conversations, memories he had of times spent with his brother.

122 “Journaling was my release,” Tommy said. “It helped with  
123 healing. I didn’t want to forget how I felt then, the hurt and  
124 anguish. I wrote it to heal, to remember. Time helps, but it still  
125 hurts.”

126 Tommy wrote candidly about his struggles with insomnia  
127 and depression during this time, his need for isolation, his anger  
128 about what was happening to his brother and best friend. He  
129 wrote about looking for answers to why this happened, as well as  
130 his search for closure that has never really come.

131 “Emotions are emotions, and you don’t always get to  
132 pick what you want to feel,” Fontaine said. “At times like that, my  
133 advice is simple: Be there for the people that need you. Writing  
134 about this, I hope people read it and say, ‘I’ve felt that feeling,’  
135 and know that it’s OK to feel it.”

136 While Salmon and McSweeney worked on editing the  
137 manuscript into 2025, “Tommy continued receiving stories and  
138 reflections he wanted to include,” Salmon said, noting late  
139 contributions from people whose lives Tim had touched,  
140 including Tim Allen, Kevin Haseltine, Frank Capen, and Joey  
141 Fennessey, as well as Vermont Academy football coach Dexter  
142 Morse.

143 Messages from classmates and teammates at UMass also  
144 arrived late in the process and were added to the story.

145 “Each addition enriched the story,” Salmon said.

146 He said he “encouraged Tommy to write more about his  
147 parents. Tim’s illness had devastated them, yet their strength and  
148 character were central to understanding the Fontaine family. They  
149 were the backbone of that all-American family and helped  
150 explain so much about why Tim became the man he was. Tommy  
151 later sent me audio recordings about each parent’s life, and I am  
152 grateful those memories were included.”

153 The final stage involved securing trademark permissions  
154 from WNESU, Vermont Academy, and UMass to use their logos  
155 on the book’s cover. “Each institution was gracious and  
156 supportive, and none required a fee,” Salmon added.

## 157 **One last round**

158 Salmon said that his role in “helping bring this book to  
159 life came from respect — for Tim, for Tommy, and for the entire  
160 Fontaine family, who had always treated me with kindness.”

161 “I knew Tommy’s true purpose was not personal  
162 recognition, but to honor his brother and to help others walking  
163 the painful road of loving someone who is dying. I believe he has  
164 done exactly that,” he added.

165 When Tim became ill, Salmon said he stayed close to  
166 him and his family.

167 “Scott Falzo and I started a ‘200 Club’ and opened an  
168 account at TD Bank. We quickly raised \$20,000 for Tim’s family.  
169 Scott’s Shell station was the perfect collection point, and Scott  
170 knew everyone. Our hope was to find 200 people willing to  
171 donate \$100, but the generosity of the community far exceeded  
172 expectations.”

173 Salmon recalls that in the final months of his life, “Tim  
174 made custom mirrors for both Scott and me as a token of  
175 appreciation. Attached was a simple card that read, ‘Don’t ever  
176 change.’

177 "It was classic Tim — thoughtful, personal, and heartfelt,"  
178 Salmon said.  
179 During Fontaine's final weeks, "I visited him at his  
180 house," Salmon said. "He was weak and had lost his hair, yet his  
181 spirit remained. Tim cracked open a couple of Budweiser cans for  
182 us, and we shared one last round together."

####END TEXT####

BIO/COATTAIL:

####BEGIN BIO/COATTAIL####

183 For more information about *My Journey: Brother to*  
184 *Brother*, including how to order the book, visit [mrfwrites.com](http://mrfwrites.com).

####END BIO/COATTAIL####

LAST ISSUE IN WHICH THIS FILE CAN BE RUN:

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####END MAXISSUE####

LINKS:

####BEGIN LINKS####

186

####END LINKS####

VIDEO:

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LOGLINE (SOCIAL MEDIA):

####BEGIN LOGLINE####

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