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Spotlight on Seniors

by Amanda Leidig

Bob Myhr

Lopez Island

Many will know Bob Myhr as the District number six County Council member and the chairman of the San Juan County Council. Bob's story of finding his way from the land of 10,000 lakes, Minnesota, to a small island in the San Juan Islands is probably a lot less known, however.

In January of 1938 Bob was born in Minneapolis. He spent his elementary, middle and high school days growing up in the same town, and in fact, the same house. When it came time to pick a college, Bob chose Amherst College in Massachusetts.

"I wasn't quite sure what I was going to study," he said of his early college days. But soon his interests came to light. Bob began studying both economics and Latin America, all



Bob as high school senior

the while receiving the Charles W. Merrill Scholar award from 1956 to 1960. He graduated cum laude with a Bachelors of Arts in economics.

After leaving his childhood home in Minneapolis, Bob never returned there



Bob, today

to live. During his freshman and sophomore years he did return home to work during the short summers.

After graduating from Amherst, Bob's educational journey was far from over. He immediately began working on his Master's degree at Columbia University. Following his passion for foreign study Bob graduated in 1962 with his M.I.A. in International Affairs and Economics. During his years of study at Columbia University Bob was named Scholar of the School of International Affairs from 1960 to 1962.

In 1963 Bob was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship to study in Brazil, where he concentrated on student politics in the same country.

In 1968, Bob graduated from Columbia University with his Doctorate in Public Law and Government. It looked as if his university days were over. But they weren't. Bob took a job in Seattle, as an Assistant Professor of Political

Science at the University of Washington. Shortly after moving to Seattle, Bob purchased a cabin on Orcas Island, where he often spent weekends. It wasn't his first introduction to island life, however. While in college he had spent three summers living and working on Martha's Vineyard. "I fell in love with island life," Bob said of the summers spent on the island. It was that early introduction to the joys and intricacies of living on an island that propelled Bob's fascination with the lifestyle.

During his time at the University of Washington, Bob received a Fulbright Faculty Fellowship which allowed him to study National Resource Management in Chile. He was there during Salvador Allende's first year in office. According to Bob, it was a politically explosive time for Chile, as Allende was a controversial socialist president, who was later thrown out of office.

Bob taught at the University of Washington until 1974. "I was offered a job I couldn't refuse," Bob said of leaving the university.

The Weyerhaeuser Company asked Bob if he would work for their International Group. It was a job of a lifetime, offering the opportunity to travel and work with all of the international aspects of the business. While working for Weyerhaeuser, Bob met his wife Joyce. The couple married in 1977.

In 1982, Bob and Joyce purchased a small cabin on Lopez. The cabin, which was located on the beach at Port Stanley, was a welcome haven for the couple. Bob worked for the Weyerhaeuser Company until 1985, when he decided to "exchange quantity of life for quality of life."

That is when he and Joyce decided it was time to move to Lopez Island. "I'd always

wanted to live in the San Juans," said Bob. They bought a house on Davis Head and have made their home on Lopez ever since.

Bob took the job as Executive Director of the San Juan Preservation Trust in 1985. He worked for the organization until 2002.

It was then that Bob tried retirement. But it didn't stick. "I like being involved," he said.

Bob began to try his hand at local politics and in 2005 he was elected to the County Council, where he has been serving his community ever since.

"I've been fortunate enough to travel throughout the world and I still feel the San Juan Islands are one of the most beautiful and special places around," Bob said of his home. Not only that, he has a loving wife who continuously backs him. "I get a lot of wonderful support from my wife Joyce."

Bob feels he has been extremely blessed in life to enjoy several once-in-a-lifetime experiences. He has hiked in Machu Picchu in Peru, toured the Volga river in Russia, watched macaws on the Amazon in Brazil and seen baboons at the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa. And that's not even all of his adventures -- he's also sailed on a containership from Fujairah on the Saudi Arabian peninsula to Taiwan and back to Singapore, he's watched penguins in Antarctica, hitch-hiked across the United States and climbed to the summit of



Bob on his way to the summit of Mt. Rainier in 1977

Mount Rainier.

Bob has three children. Bob has two from his previous marriage, Elizabeth, who is a poet and a homemaker and Tim, who is an architect, and his stepson Bob Dyer, who owns a manufacturing company in Bellingham. Bob and Joyce have three grandchildren, Lawton Dyer, 13, Rosamund Dyer, nine and George Merrifield, six.