

Bob Royer(1943 - 2019)

Bob Royer

A devoted son of the Pacific Northwest, Robert J. Royer lived a full life in the bounty of the land and the love of those dear to him, and he left a unique and lasting legacy for the City of Seattle, its region, and the many here and elsewhere whose lives he touched.

Born September 16, 1943 in Medford, Oregon to Mildred Hampson and Russell Royer, Bob Royer may be best known for his service as deputy mayor of Seattle from 1978 - 1983 during the administration of his brother, Mayor Charles Royer, when he helped infuse City Hall with renewed energy and optimism that endures to this day. Bob's lifelong role as a mentor and advocate of rising public servants was mirrored by his central role in his extended family, where his wisdom, warmth, broad shoulders, and corny jokes were inexhaustible resources.

Bob enrolled at the University of Oregon in 1961, where he majored in history and worked at the campus radio station as well as the local ABC affiliate in Eugene. His appetite for adventure whetted by an undergraduate hitchhiking trip across Europe, Bob joined the Peace Corps in 1966, serving in the Mid-Western Region of Nigeria. When a series of military coups made his presence untenable, he was evacuated on a raft down the Niger River, dodging gunfire from the riverbanks.

After finishing his undergraduate degree at Portland State University in 1967, Bob took a position as a news photographer with KGW-TV in Portland, but was soon called up for military service in Vietnam. He served in the Army Media Corps in Saigon until 1970, when he returned to the States and met his first daughter, Amy. He then resumed his career in journalism, which included roles with King TV as well as a six-month Washington Post Kiplinger Foundation fellowship in 1973 during that year's Watergate hearings.

Having helped elect his brother mayor in 1977, Bob served as the city's deputy mayor for five years. Rejecting the outdated attitudes and priorities that had left many major American cities in decline by the mid-1970s, Bob balanced pragmatic operational needs with a keen eye on the quality of life available to citizens of every class and station. During this time, Bob also led the negotiations for the Skagit River Treaty, which President Ronald Reagan hailed for having "constructively and ingeniously" settled the long-standing High Ross Dam dispute between the U.S. and Canada.

Bob continued his civic role as a public affairs consultant from 1983 to 1999, representing clients interested in regional infrastructure issues, serving on the Board of the Washington Public Power Supply System (WPPSS), and leading the Washington Centennial Commis-sion. He served as City Light's director of communications and public affairs from 1999 - 2007, and then returned to the private sector in 2007, when he helped Seattle-based Coastal Environmental Systems deliver a software product to improve public safety and communications in urban centers.

In 2008 Bob joined the Gallatin Group, a regional public affairs company, to lead its strategic transformation in Seattle and provide leadership on client work in areas such as public utilities, media, crisis communications, and local government affairs. Bob wrote extensively for his own Cascadia Courier blog as well as for Crosscut and served for more than ten years on the board of HistoryLink, the online encyclopedia of Washington State history, ultimately becoming its chairman.

In 1998, Bob met the love of his life, Barbara Larimer, whom he married in 2002. Together they helped raise Bob's younger children Chloe and Ari; were loving and beloved Uncle Bob and Aunt Barb to their nieces and nephews; and held Bob's grandchildren Robbie and Lulu from infancy to near-adulthood. They traveled the world, golfed, cheered the Mariners, supported numerous nonprofit organizations, and toasted sunsets from Lake Wenatchee to the hills of Provence. Bob supported Barb as she earned a certificate from the NW Wine Academy, leading to cherished time together investigating various terroirs as Barb launched a new career in the wine industry. During their last year together, their days in the Willamette Valley would begin with coffee on the back deck with Bob's hummingbirds, and end with a good Pinot under the stars.

Bob was diagnosed in April of 2018 with Merkel cell carcinoma with an underlying, complicating chronic lymphocytic leukemia. As residents and interns were drawn to his side by this exotic cancer, he made sure they had every opportunity to learn not only about his condition, but also about the history of the [University of Washington](#) medical school and Fred Hutch, and insisted that his tissues be used by the Merkel cell team for their research.

Bob passed away on Wednesday, April 17, 2019 in Seattle. He is survived by his wife, Barbara Larimer; brother Charles Royer; children Amy Janzen, Chloe Royer, and Ari Royer; grandchildren Robbie and Lulu Janzen; and his beloved

nieces, nephews, cousins, extended family members and friends.

A speech he penned for his brother captures Bob's passion for the place he made his home: "Seattle is a city that lies gently in the arms of the land." In turn, Bob lay gently in the arms of his city, just as his friends felt the warmth of his own loyal embrace. Seattle is the better for Bob Royer's life, as are we all.

A gathering to remember Bob Royer will be held on Wednesday, May 15, at 5:00 pm at the Seattle Children's Theatre, 201 Thomas Street, Seattle. In lieu of flowers, in the spirit of Bob's love and dedication to Washington state history, and his interest in raising awareness about his rare disease, memorial contributions may be made to HistoryLink.org or to Merkelcell.org/royer.

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