



## Robert D. Tokarczyk

August 15, 1926 - February 27, 2023

In February of this year, heaven recruited a worthy man to help watch over all God's forests. He is also pretty handy at carpentry.

Bob was born in Tacoma, Washington, on August 15, 1926, the middle child of William Walter and Lily Brown Tokarczyk. Bob had an older brother Walt and younger sister Dorothy. As a child, Bob spoke some Polish with his family, though his father wanted all the Tokarczyk children to master English to succeed in America. Nonetheless Bob grew up in the heart of the Great Depression, he recalls a happy childhood and close-knit family. "We were a loving, supportive family, and all got along well." His father worked as a logger-falling timber and running machinery. In the olden days they called that trade a "busheler". The family lived in South Aberdeen in the early years. The siblings would come home from school and help their elders learn English. Hunting, fishing, clam digging were not only for recreation, but to supplement the dinner table. Rods, reels, clam shovels and rifles were "tools" not toys. Later the family relocated to the Spanaway/Parkland area. Peeling cascara bark and helping neighbors bring in the hay instilled good work ethics. Bob graduated from Tacoma's Lincoln High School in 1944. He was already interested in forestry, and took introductory forestry classes in high school. He relished driving the local Pacific Fruit delivery truck for a summer vocation and the "characters" he met on the loading docks. In the summertime their father, "Willy" would get trout fingerlings and help the Boy Scouts stock fertile streams on National Forest lands.

With his sights set on a career in forestry, Bob enrolled in Washington State College (now Washington State University) in Pullman, Washington. He majored in Forest Management with a minor in Wildlife, receiving his B.S. in 1951. The Pine Manor Co-Op, was his dorm/study hall/social environment. Bob learned to snow ski at WSC. To raise money the Pine Manor crew would organize dances and other events. In summers, he worked various student forestry jobs, such as grading roads near Spirit Lake at the foot of Mount St. Helens.

1951 was a particularly busy year for Bob. With the Korean War under way, he was drafted to serve in the U.S. Marine Corps. Since his childhood, Bob had suffered from eye problems and twice had surgery. As a result of Bob's partial blindness, the Marines discharged him, which allowed him to report for his job as a Junior Forester. He not only completed college and took his first permanent, full-time job with the USFS, he also married his college sweetheart, Barbara Heald. They had two children, Marsha (b. 1952) and Bruce (b. 1956).

A personable and dedicated employee, Bob rose rapidly through numerous positions in the USFS. The first years of his career were spent in southwest Washington. After assignments in Packwood, Randle, and Vancouver, Bob became the District Ranger for the Mount Adams Ranger District in Trout Lake. Inspecting the sheep grazing areas offered the experience of horsemanship and pack animals. The family acquired a stubborn donkey named Zeke which taught his son/daughter valuable lessons in Zen and patience.

In 1963, the USFS assigned Bob to the Siskiyou National Forest out of Grants Pass, Oregon (now part of the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest) to assist with timber salvage following the historic Columbus Day Storm of October 12, 1962. In the storm's aftermath, Bob and his colleagues were able to salvage and sell over 400 million board feet of timber. Bob's wisdom and friendly management style opened new opportunities for him in the USFS. Being the creative person, instead of saving for Disneyland, he

designed/built/landscaped a concrete below ground swimming pool to compete with the neighbors. Later, after enjoying fishing the Rogue River, Bob designed/fabricated/fiber glassed a double ended float boat in his on sawhorses in his garage.

After seven years in the Siskiyou National Forest, he became head of the timber staff on the Willamette National Forest. Working from the USFS office in Eugene, Bob negotiated timber sales and harvesting-balancing social, economic, and environmental interests. He was part referee and conductor of harmony. "I introduced the 'Sales and Trails' breakfasts to bring people together to resolve differences," Bob recalled. Under his direction, environmental advocates, scientists, and timber industry representatives worked together to develop harvesting plans that protected trails and vistas. "In one year, there were 149 appeals contesting timber sales, and we settled 148," Bob said proudly of his peacemaking. In 1974, on the Willamette National Forest he facilitated the sale and harvest of one "billion" board feet of timber. This is the highest level of production ever in a U.S. National Forest. Just imagine all the oxygen that second growth produced! It was this stint in Eugene when the family upgraded from tent camping to a Chevy pickup/camper configuration. Bob added spare side tanks for extra range (during the 1970's gas shortage). With the camper loaded you could literally see the fuel gage move while driving up Santiam Pass in route to the Hoodoo ski area. His brother Walter also worked for the USFS the majority of his life. They would often share their fondness of how "back in the day" the Forest Service attacked wild fires. They were from the era of: lookouts stationed on peaks, smoke jumpers deployed in hours, hot shot teams ready and willing. Both he and Walt guided (in small planes) fire retardant drops for heavy air tankers to suppress major fires. Both these Tokarczyk's always had "Go" bags for when they deployed for regional fire support. In her early life, their sister Dorothy, worked summers at the Burley Mountain and Sleeping Beauty fire lookouts on the Gifford Pinchot National Forest.

In 1974, he transferred to the Deschutes National Forest in Bend Oregon to be the Deputy Forest Supervisor. This was pine tree country. He and the family enjoyed Mt. Bachelor and its distinct seasons. Bob had taken up the golfing hobby, so the Sunriver course offered some local rest and relaxation. Bob became Forest Supervisor of the Gifford Pinchot National Forest (Vancouver, Washington) in 1976 and retired in 1983. The "GP" as they called it, comprised 1.3 million acres of timber/lakes/trails/camp grounds and other multi-use recreation. He mentored a staff of 900 permanent employees and 500 extra during the summer.

His management skills were put to the test when on May 18, 1980 Mount St. Helens erupted. In conjunction with an executive order issued by Washington Governor Dixie Lee Ray and working closely with local agencies, Bob enforced an exclusionary "red zone" around the perimeter of the volcano. His brother Walter, south of Randle, lived in the "blue zone" where "locals only" travel was enforced. Because he evacuated USFS facilities and lands in the red zone, no Forest Service personnel were hurt in the blast.

"Bob did an outstanding job coordinating communications and activities among numerous government services," recalled Jim Rombach, who headed up Weyerhaeuser operations in the Mount St. Helens area. Jim and Bob were good friends from their shared experience in Eugene and Society of American Foresters. Bob, President Carter, and the governors of Idaho and Washington sat knee-to-knee on the President's helicopter and surveyed the vast damage. During moments of calm, he and the President chatted about shared fishing experiences.

Lauding his "conservation ethic," the Vancouver Columbian noted Bob's deserved "pride that his [Gifford Pinchot] forest is greener, lusher, more productive and more enjoyable than adjacent private and state lands." Bob received a Superior Service Award from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and a letter of commendation from Washington's Members of Congress. Bob Williams, who succeeded him as Forest Supervisor of the Gifford Pinchot shared that "He left the forest in super condition, and I inherited a well-run

organization."

A member of the Society of American Foresters since 1959, he served as Executive Director of the Oregon Society of American Foresters (OSAF) and held this position from 1984 to 1991. Working out of the office by the Portland Zoo, Bob held the job of Executive Director of the Western Forestry and Conservation Association.

During retirement, Bob volunteered his forestry expertise to several organizations. For two decades, he and Jim Rombach helped manage forestlands owned by the local Boy Scouts of America ... and helped select Outstanding Tree Farms as a judge for the Oregon Small Woodland Association. Always a loyal Cougar fan, for many years he was active in the "Ag Alumni" of Washington State University, and served as president of the organization. In 1981, Bob received the Outstanding Alumnus Award from WSU's Department of Forestry and Range Management. He was an active member and twice president of the Pacific Northwest Forest Service Association, fondly known as the "OldSmokeys." Bob also served for 15 years on the board of the National Museum of Forest Service History. In 1994 OSAF honored him with a Lifetime Achievement Award. In 2000, the national SAF recognized Bob and Jim Rombach for the longtime effort to promote forestry with its prestigious John A. Beale Memorial Award.

While retired in Vancouver, Wa., Bob and Barbara again upgraded the camping technology to a Class A RV. They began the tradition of outings in the Gifford Pinchot and clamming in Grays Harbor County with his brother Walt and other family members willing to "rough it". Annual elk hunting trips south of Randle, WA allowed time with Walt to reminisce on their shared Forest Service history. It was his son's privilege to chauffeur this duo around their old stomping grounds in the GP looking for the elusive trophy elk. They didn't harvest many bulls, but it was a true-to-life history lesson on the roads, camp grounds and timber units those two built and managed.

Bob and Barbara's state-wide travel adventures were cut short when she succumbed to cancer in 1990. His quiet bachelor life changed when he

married her sister Beverly in 1991, who had two grown children of her own, Lynda (b. 1948) and Sandy (b. 1950). Bob's kid's enjoyed the union because they got to keep the same circle of relatives. Now with a worthy travel companion, he and Bev discovered more of the U.S. They took their RV across the 48 states and back. European cruises, the Panama Canal, Jamaica and the off-grid Adams Fork Campground where a sample of their diversity in destinations. Yearly treks near Father's Day to Seaside, OR was also a welcomed family re-union. He used his free time to become part-time steward at the Skamania Lodge Golf Course. Sadly, Bev passed away in 2011.

A member of the First Presbyterian Church of Vancouver, he became more active in their weekly events. During one such gathering he met "someone out of his league". Her name was Virginia Williams. They became great travelers and were able to attend the annual Wishkah Tokarczyk picnics in Aberdeen, Wa., and other family happenings. In 2018, near the anniversary of the Mount St. Helens eruption he and Virginia attended a dinner event for the Carter Center foundation. Bob gave a presentation on the mountain's past/present/future and was delighted to dine and chat with the President again.

This person was a son, brother, husband, uncle, father, grandfather, great grandfather who was proud of his grandchildren, Genevieve Ham, Julia Knudsen (Matt), Tyrone Tokarczyk, and Russa Kinnaman (Eric) and 3 great grandchildren, proud of his heritage and his accomplishments ... but never put himself on a pedestal. He was a religious man, not so much in words but by deeds and morals. He was a mountain (St. Helens) of a man with the heart of a saint. Sometimes life isn't measured by the moments you've shared ... but by the mountains you've built. Bob often used the phrase "they were good people" when describing co-workers.

He was "good people" too.

A memorial for Robert D. Tokarczyk will be held on April 1st at 1:00 at the First

Presbyterian Church of Vancouver, 4300 Main St. Vancouver WA, 98663

# Tribute Wall

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“ *We are deeply sorry for your loss ~ Evergreen Memorial Gardens Cemetery, Funeral Chapel and Crematory*

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**A Memorial Tree was planted for Robert D. Tokarczyk - March 02, 2023 at 12:00 AM**