

## Bob Ream

Mar 25, 2017



HELENA – Bob Ream died at home on March 22, 2017 with family at his side. Bob was born August 2, 1936, in Richland Center, Wisconsin, the second of three children to Howard and Eunice Ream. He grew up outside Milwaukee on a farm owned by his maternal grandparents, where he helped raise chickens, can vegetables for the winter, and chase pheasants from the corn rows. Bob and his siblings, Lois and Dave, spent most of their summers with their grandma at the cabin, or “shack,” on nearby Lake DeNoon, hosting scores of family and friends on weekends. Refrigeration at the lake was a wooden chest icebox on the back porch, which the kids filled by hauling 60-80 pound ice blocks from the general store on their coaster wagon.

Bob attended one- and two-room schoolhouses through the 7th grade. His dad transferred to the USDA office in Washington D.C. in 1949, where Bob’s new high school had over 1,000 students per grade. After Bob finished 9th grade, his dad took a job with what later became USAID in Bangkok, Thailand, then a sleepy town with lots of canals and few cars. The family lived in a beautiful old Thai house overlooking a canal that served as a primary thoroughfare of commerce. Bob and his brother Dave enjoyed a “gap year” from school, learning “street” language, tastes, and smells. In early 1952, they traveled 1,000 miles by train to the foothills of the Himalayas to attend Woodstock, a boarding school in northern India.

The family returned to Wisconsin at the end of 1952, and Bob spent his junior year at Pulaski High School in Milwaukee. The family then moved to the Philippines for his senior year, where his dad took another job with USAID. There he met his life-long friend, Peter Harken, and they spent much of their free time sailing in Manila Bay and occasionally crewing for races. Bob often recounted sailing with Peter up to a huge aircraft carrier, part of the U.S. 7th fleet, and being invited aboard. These adventures in Asia inspired Bob’s life-long interest in travel and world cultures, and his year in the Philippines cemented his enthusiasm for sailing, an activity he continued throughout his life.

Bob entered the University of Wisconsin in 1955. Coincidentally, his friend Peter Harken also enrolled at UW, and with others such as Art Mitchell and Peter Barrett, they continued their wild adventures, tales of which would fill many a room with laughter over the years. Bob was a member of UW's Hoofers outing club, through which he continued sailing, and learned to mountaineer, ice sail, canoe, and ski. College summers included working in western Washington, first in a logging camp and then on a Forest Service trail crew in the Cascades, with weekends reserved for mountain climbing in the Cascade Range and Olympic Mountains.

Bob graduated UW in 1959 with a degree in agronomy. A graduate level plant ecology class taken during his junior year was a turning point, as it was an opportunity to study plants and animals in their natural environments instead of as agricultural commodities. Following graduation, Bob left for an assistantship at the University of Utah working on plant communities of Utah's Wasatch Mountains. During his year and a half in Utah, he and his team sampled and plotted the entire Wasatch range. With friends living in the Salt Lake Valley, he skied much of the local terrain long before most of the ski areas were developed, and built a couple of kayaks for floating rivers. While completing his master's degree, Bob married Catherine Hardy, his college girlfriend.

They returned to UW where Bob began his Ph.D. program in the fall of 1960. Bob learned programming on UW's first computer and entered the data he had collected from the Wasatch Range on punch cards – one card for each species in every plot in every stand sampled – an immense task. Bob received his Ph. D. in 1963 in botany and zoology and was hired to teach at the University of Denver. While there, he started the Colorado chapter of The Nature Conservancy, served on ski patrol at Arapahoe Basin, and helped start the DU Alpine Club. He honed his skiing skills while in Colorado, and skiing became a lifelong passion he shared with family and friends.

Bob was hired by the U.S. Forest Service in 1966 to study ecology in Minnesota's million-acre Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. Over the next three years he was able to hike and canoe most of the trails and lakes in the BWCA. During this period, Bob met Dr. Dave Mech, who was studying wolves in Isle Royale National Park in Michigan, and began assisting Dave there and in the BWCA. This was the only area in the lower 48 states then inhabited by wolves, and Bob was with Dave in 1968 when the team captured the first wolf and radio-collared it.

In 1969, Bob was offered a faculty position in the University of Montana's School of Forestry by Dean Arnold Bolle, a noted conservation leader, and moved to the state he would call home for the rest of his life. He began the Wolf Ecology Project in 1973 and determined no established pack or breeding pair existed in Montana. He received funding to hire two biologists, and in 1979 they trapped a wolf in the North Fork of the Flathead River valley and tracked her for a year and a half. This wolf found a mate and produced seven pups in 1982, marking the first pack documented in the northern U.S. Rockies in at least 50 years. By 1995, Bob estimated 80 wolves resided in northwest Montana, and wolves now appear to have become a stable part of Montana's wildlife ecosystem again.

Bob was well known for heading up the Wolf Ecology Project, but he took most pride in the Wilderness and Civilization Program he established at UM in 1975. The W&C Program is an interdisciplinary program providing students an opportunity to explore humans' relationship to wilderness and civilization, and includes faculty from wilderness management, ecology, philosophy, Native American studies, economics, creative writing, and others. The program begins each fall with a 10-12 day backpack trip, combining outdoor skills with education. Bob often described how students' inhibitions

dissolved during the trip, which stimulated lively class discussions once they returned to their traditional classroom settings.

Thousands of students studied with Bob during his tenure at UM, in courses such as resource conservation, large mammal conservation, wildlife ecology and management, habitat management, and wilderness management, and Bob helped launch the careers of many talented conservationists. Bob capped his UM career as Acting Dean of the School of Forestry from 1993-1994.

Bob was passionately involved in politics. He served in the Montana Legislature as a representative from Missoula from 1983-1997, where he distinguished himself on fish and game, taxation, and natural resource issues, sponsoring Montana's stream access law, mini-Superfund law, and restitution payments for illegally taken wildlife, among others. Bob served as Chair of the Montana Democratic Party from 1997-2005, a period in which the Party saw significant electoral gains at the legislative and statewide levels.

Bob's other professional accomplishments included chairing the Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks Commission from 2009-2012, serving on the interagency Northern Rocky Mountain Wolf Recovery Team, and serving on the Board of the International Wolf Center, to name a few.

While Bob experienced an extraordinary life of adventure and accomplishments, most important to him was his family. His daughter Tarn was born in 1967, and son Rolf in 1969. Bob enjoyed helping them with 4-H, gardening, setting up the tepee in the back yard, summer vacations in Wisconsin, visiting his old stomping grounds in the Philippines and Taiwan, canoe trips, backpacking, and skiing. Bob married Beth Ferris in 1978, and together they shared a small farm with Rolf and Tarn in the upper Rattlesnake of Missoula. Bob maintained a lifelong friendship with Beth. In the early 1990's, Bob fell in love with and later married Ann Brodsky and moved to Helena where they raised their son, Jake, the third of Bob's children. Together they enjoyed numerous ski trips, backpack and canoe adventures, fall outings to Yellowstone National Park, and travel overseas, including biking in France, trekking in Peru, and hiking in Wales. A highlight of his last 15 years was sharing ownership of a sailboat moored in the British Virgin Islands and annual sailing trips with family and friends. The boat's name, "Relaxin'," aptly describes the vacation the family strove for, although on occasion their sailing trips were anything but relaxing. Bob proudly logged 50 ski days throughout the western U.S. during the winter of 2015-16, most at his favored Great Divide. He and Ann began their spring with a 3-week sailing trip in the BVIs, first with friends Martha Newell and Mike Kadas, then with Rolf, wife Sacha, and Bob's favorite grandson, Griffin.

Less than two weeks following their return to Helena, Bob visited his doctor to check on some belly discomfort. He was diagnosed with stage IV metastatic pancreatic cancer. Despite this diagnosis, he continued giving lectures on the effects of climate change on Montana's wildlife, advocated for passage of Montana's medical marijuana ballot initiative, enjoyed trips to Glacier and Yellowstone National Parks, and spent an enormous amount of quality time with his kids, friends, and family. Bob was inducted into the Montana Outdoor Hall of Fame and received the Montana Environmental Information Center's Len and Sandy Sargent award for meritorious service in December. With his strong spirit, he had many good months in late summer and fall, and 2016 proved to be a rich year.

It would be difficult to fully convey Bob's impact on Montana's environment, his students, and the people who gravitated towards his warm, infectious, understated wisdom and kindness. Very rarely does a person come along with the strength, optimism, vitality for life, humility, and good nature Bob

possessed. His constant and fearless sense of adventure also will be remembered by many – even if it got him in a few bad spots over the years. True to his nature, Bob imparted humor and bad puns to the very end.

Bob is survived by his wife, Ann; his children, Tarn, Missoula, Rolf (Sacha Vignieri), Seattle, and Jake Brodsky, Helena; his grandson, Griffin, Seattle; his sister, Lois Higgins, Salmon Arm, B.C.; his brother, Dave, Seattle; and many nephews and nieces and their children. He was preceded in death by his parents and “Uncle” Harry, Lois’ husband.

Before he died, Bob established the Bob Ream Endowment for Wilderness and Civilization, held at the University of Montana Foundation, to provide continuing support to the Wilderness and Civilization Program within the College of Forestry and Conservation at UM. He requested that in lieu of flowers, gifts be made in his honor toward this endowment, by sending checks to the University of Montana Foundation, in memory of Bob Ream, P.O. Box 7159, Missoula, MT 59807-7159, or through on-line donations at <http://www.cfc.umt.edu/bobream>, where more information can be found.

A memorial service for Bob is tentatively scheduled for April 23 at noon at the Kleffner Ranch outside Helena with reception to follow.