
Dr. Robert Russell Rath



Rath, Dr. Robert Russell 86 May 11, 1928 Sept. 11, 2014 Dr. Robert Russell Rath entered this world May 11, 1928, in Topeka, Kan., the younger of two children to Robert S. and Alice Elizabeth Rath. At the age of 4, his family moved to Moclips, Wash., where he grew up and graduated from Moclips High School in 1945. In 1949, he graduated from Washington State University with a degree in general science, married his first wife, Betty, and began teaching fifth grade in Sunnyside, Wash. By 1952, he had earned his master's degree from WSU and celebrated the birth of his first son, Rob. Moving to Lake Oswego, Oregon, he taught school at Lake Grove and for a few years was principal at Lakewood and Forrest Hills. The year 1954 brought the birth of his second son, Brett, and in 1956, his third son Clifton was born.

Resigning his position in Lake Oswego, Bob took his family to Eugene to pursue a doctorate of education at the University of Oregon. In 1966, after serving on the faculty at the University of Alberta, Canada, Bob, a strong proponent of educational reform, was a key figure in the establishment of the Northwest Regional Education Laboratory (NWREL), a non-profit organization working closely with schools, districts and other agencies to develop creative and practical solutions to important educational challenges. In the early '70s, his family life was sadly disrupted by the death of his wife, Betty. Nevertheless, however, Bob and NWREL were instrumental in creating educational systems in Alaska, Montana, Hawaii, Guam, Yap, Palau and many others places. From 1980 to his retirement in 1995, Bob served as executive director of NWREL. To quote the late U.S. Senator Mark O. Hatfield, "Bob, your commitment not only to education, but to people, has distinguished you without equal in the educational community." In 1985, Bob met Melva Porter Jones, and after seven and a half years of dating, they married in 1993. After retiring in 1995, they enjoyed another 19 years of traveling and adventures across the globe. Bob said of their life together, "Never a dull or unhappy moment." An athlete to the end, Bob always traveled with his tennis racquet. He had a passion for cooking and dining and loved travel, family mushroom hunting expeditions and photography, and was always ready (opponent beware!) for a game of cribbage. After being diagnosed with pancreatic cancer this past spring, Bob passed peacefully in his home Sept. 11, 2014. He is survived by his wife, Melva P. Rath; sister, Marjorie Whitaker; three sons; a stepdaughter; two stepsons; 12 grandchildren; and 11 great-grandchildren. A memorial service will be held at 2 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 11, 2014, at Portland Community College, Sylvania Campus in the Performing Arts Center. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in Bob's memory to: feedthechildren.org.

Funeral Home

Young's Funeral Home | Funeral Home Tigard OR

11831 SW Pacific Highway Tigard, OR 97223
(503) 639-1206

Published in The Oregonian from Sept. 18 to Sept. 21, 2014
