

## Bob (Robert) Neufeld ... one of NWARTA's Busy Members

Born in 1929, Bob has lived all his life, outside of his time at the U of A and teaching Armed Service dependents in Laar, Germany, in Grande Prairie. While in Laar, Bob determined to “experience life as a resident not as a tourist” and continued that philosophy all his life, being an integral part of our community in a large way.



After high school Bob thought he might want to be a pastor and started by taking a year of Christian education and training but was encouraged by his pastor to get a university education as well. This led to Bob going to the U of A graduating with a B.Ed. with a

double major in Physical Education and History. (You can say that Bob never stinted at anything.) Grande Prairie was desperate for teachers, as it seems GP was too far away and too rural for most young teachers to want to teach here in the “sticks”. Bob got a desperate phone call from Walter Kujath, who was the high school principal, to please come back home to teach. Back home he came and he started teaching for the princely sum of \$296.00/month.

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Bob believed in what he loved, and he loved physical education. However, he thought it was important to teach outside of his own area including Social Studies and Local History. But sports never were out of his circle of life for long. While attending University he was recruited for the UofA Golden Bears hockey team; and once in GP he coached the GP Athletics for 2 years. In addition, he started the High School Hockey League. All the while, to use up his spare time, for years he played for the local hockey team, going to all the practices and subbing when he could. Did I mention that he taught downhill skiing for 50 years? That he

was active in establishing the Wild Kakwa project? He was part of the protest to stop coal mining in the area, working on this for 20 years and collecting thousands of signatures. It was a “big battle and we never gave up for the sake of our grandchildren.”

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Bob and his teaching partner realised that the P.Ed. curriculum was not very exciting and proceeded to develop a unique and exciting program. They wanted to instill in the students a love of sports, “lifetime sports for all” was his goal. He managed to grab no longer needed army surplus downhill and XCcountry wooden skis; he taught students how to use a knife and gun safety; in fact students had the opportunity to examine 20 sport activities as an introduction to P.Ed. By the time students were in Grade 12, they chose a sport topic for Individual Study. He said it was wonderful to have the support of the Board, the principal, and the community. Bob was invited to other school districts to explain his philosophy and success of the GP program.

Bob taught school for 33 years. He didn't have to retire but he wanted

to. He said: “Teaching is safe and predictable but there is a whole new exciting world out there and I wanted to retire while I was still happy.” In fact, after retirement, he worked at Larry's Sports for free just to enjoy the experience. Bob loves retirement because he began to have control of his own time. “Having the luxury of time, makes your work NOT doing nothing but being in control of my time. Then even work becomes fun. Fresh air and sunshine are the best preventative medicine you can have.”

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When asked who influenced him the most in his life, Bob quickly mentioned his mother. He called her a praying mom. He recalled wonderful lifelong friends and his wife of 64 years, June.

What hobbies does Bob involve himself in now? Woodworking and carving (took it up the day he retired teaching); downhill skiing; walking every day of the year; fly fishing; hunting (he doesn't pull the trigger); campfire sing along (he was a choir director at his church too); Camp Wapiti; snow shoeing; Bob said: “my faith is a huge part of my life. Brings me joy and fulfillment”. He wants to be “available” to continue to give back to

the community to do what he can, when he can.



His advice: See your life as a pie. “How are you going to cut it up?” Considerations must be given to family, work, faith, self. “Always make

sure you have a piece of the pie for each part. Don’t let one part take away from another.”

Does he have a bucket list? To do the Chilkoot Trail. Bob says he has never been one for taking holidays “but I prefer working in new places” He did teach for 5 summers in Russia for example. He would love to see Australia and New Zealand but doesn’t think these things will happen. Looking back on his life, I would think he has already filled many buckets. He radiates joy and satisfaction. What a privilege it was to interview Bob Neufeld today.

by Yvonne Mury, NWARA Director  
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**WELLNESS**

**Bob Neufeld and NWARA “promote a healthy, active and enhanced quality of life for retired people.”**