



## Robert "Bob" Alexander Harper

May 4, 2019

Robert "Bob" Alexander Harper died on March 19, 2019, in Evanston Hospital in Evanston, following a fall the day before.

Bob was born in Chicago on April 16, 1924, the only son of Robert Haskell and Isabelle Wilsdon Harper and brother of Isabelle (Betty).

While working on the Morgan Park high school paper, he met Sally Lofgren, and they were together until her death in 2011. He attended DePauw University in 1941-1942 as a Rector Scholar, then followed Sally to the University of Chicago. Called to service in April 1943, Bob took basic training in the combat engineers, then completed navigation training in the Army Air Corps. When he got his wings, he and Sally married Sept. 28, 1944. They lived happily ever after.

Bob served with the 486th BG in the 8th AF in Sudbury, England, flying ten missions and serving on a lead crew on three. The crew ferried a plane to and from England.

Using the GI Bill, he completed four degrees at the University of Chicago. He joined the faculty of the geography department at SIU in 1950 and became department chair in 1959. The department began a doctorate program in 1961. In 1967, he became chair at the University of Maryland. After retiring in

1989, Bob and Sally returned to Carbondale in 1991.

Bob also taught during 1961-1962 at the University of Manchester, England and later at the University of Sydney, Australia; University of Durban-Westville, South Africa; and Peking University and Northwest University in China. Fulfilling an ambition to be a writer, he authored and edited geography textbooks used from second grade to the graduate level, and wrote papers on geographic education, city networks, and globalism.

In retirement, he wrote a book on the Morris years at SIU, edited a book on airmen of his bomb group, and wrote several memoirs for his family. He contributed letters to the Southern and wrote articles for the SIU and University of Chicago alumni magazines. He was president of the National Council for Geographic Education, a board member of the Association of American Geographers, and secretary of the U.S. Committee of the International Geographical Union. He was on a committee for the restructuring of social studies in Cleveland schools and served as a consultant to Encyclopedia Britannica Films and others.

He was honored by receiving the Professional Achievement Award from the University of Chicago and the George Miller Award from the National Council for Geographic Education. He was listed in Who's Who in America for over 30 years and in Leaders in Geographic Education.

Bob was chair of the inter-university advisory committees to the Rend Lake Conservancy District and the Wabash Valley Bi-State Commission. He also chaired the Urban Assembly at Maryland and was a member of the Washington Center for Metropolitan Studies. During his career, he spoke at over 30 colleges and universities.

After retirement, he twice served as president of the SIU Emeritus Association

and was the State President of State Universities Annuitants Association (SUAA). Active in Carbondale, he chaired the mayor's Citizens Advisory Committee and the Citizens Planning Advisory Committee. He was also on the founding board of the Boys and Girls Club, the facilities committee of the Park Board, the board of Convention and Tourism, and the Carbondale Planning Commission. At the First Methodist Church, he taught Sunday school and was on the church council, the board of trustees, and missions. In Maryland, he was on the advisory board of the Wesley Theological Seminary.

In retirement, his greatest joy was Southern Illinois Learning in Retirement. He promoted its creation, served as its president, was its first newsletter editor, chaired its curriculum committee, and taught courses on many topics. He also was commander and longtime newsletter editor for the 486th Bomb Group Association, organizing two trips back to the base in Sudbury, England.

In 2016, he moved to Evanston, where he joined a wonderful community at Westminster Place. At Westminster, he initiated a Learning in Retirement program and taught mini-courses on a variety of topics. He also served on the Activities Steering Committee and organized Westminster Speaks, monthly musical films, and musical evenings. Throughout his life, Bob was devoted to lifetime learning.

Most of all Bob loved Sally — his life partner of 67 years — and his family, including daughters, Carol Harper of Petaluma, California, and Judy Hendrickson of Silver Spring, Maryland, and son, Robert W. Harper of Evanston; seven grandchildren; and four great-grandsons.

He was the organizer of annual family reunions 'at the beach' and, with Sally, hosted the family gatherings at Christmas. He planned special 50th, 55th, 60th, 65th and 70th anniversary trips involving them all. He loved being with

"the kids" and "grandkids." He loved to plan trips and travel, write, and read — and was a lifetime White Sox fan.

A Memorial Service hosted by the family will be Saturday, May 4, 2019 in the United Methodist Church of Carbondale with Pastor Alan Rhein officiating.

Inurnment will follow in Pleasant Grove Memorial Park. Military Honors will be accorded.

Crain Pleasant Grove-Murdale Funeral Home is assisting with graveside services.

Donations in memory of Bob Harper can be made in memory to Bob Harper to the Boys and Girls Club of Carbondale at P.O. Box 3092, Carbondale, IL 62902.

# Cemetery Details

## **Pleasant Grove Memorial Park**

31 Memorial Dr.  
Murphysboro, IL 62966  
(618) 687-1145  
[crain@crainsonline.com](mailto:crain@crainsonline.com)

# Tribute Wall



“ *Robert "Bob" Alexander Harper*

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October 23, 2023 at 06:26 AM