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ROBERT TREUER

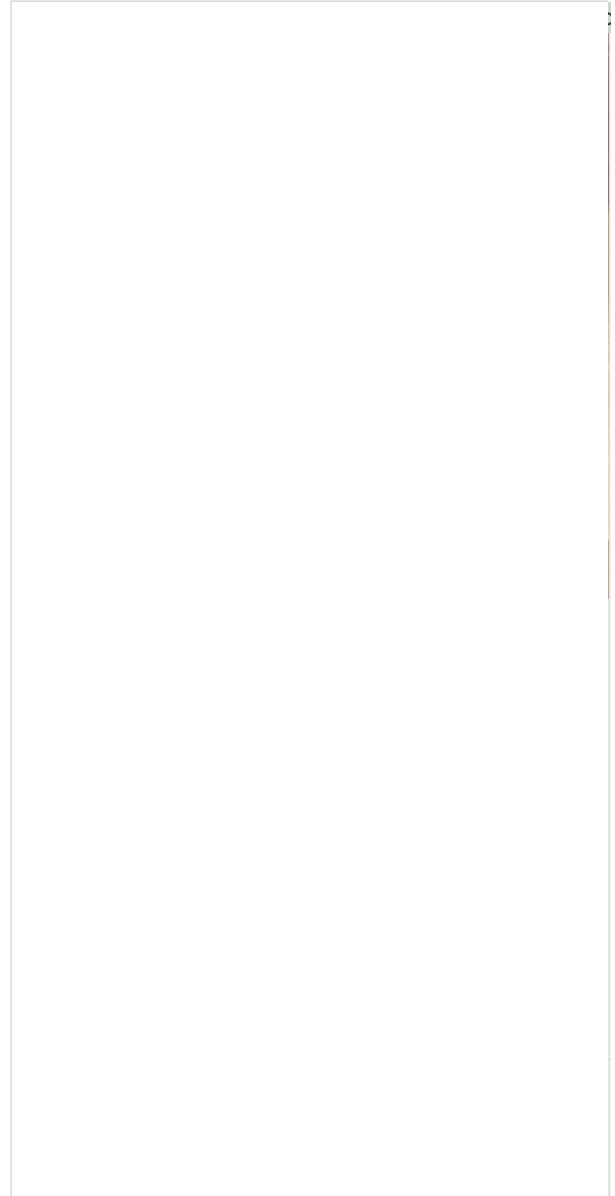
ROBERT TREUER

Robert Treuer, Bemidji resident, writer, tree-planter, educator, politician, civil rights activist, and advocate for justice—passed away in Duluth on Jan. 8, 2016, at the age of 89.

Bob was a Jewish immigrant and Holocaust survivor. He was born in Vienna, Austria, on Jan. 31, 1926, and very narrowly escaped the Nazis in 1938.

He spent time in a camp for refugees from the Spanish Civil War in Kensington Park and then a year at a Quaker boarding school in Waterford, Ireland, while his mother, Mia Treuer, worked in London to earn enough money for a passage to America. They made it to New York and settled in Yellow Springs, Ohio. His father, Fritz Treuer, joined them there. Although Fritz was an intellectual and Mia an accomplished cello and piano teacher back in Vienna, they came to America with no money and Bob had to help them rise from poverty by delivering Austrian pastries.

He was a talented piano and accordion player. In 1944, he enlisted in the U.S. Army at the age of 17, hoping for a chance to kill Nazis. Instead he was given specialized training in the Japanese language at Yale University and sent to the Pacific Theater,



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SONS. SMITH, Paul, and DEER. HE TOOK college classes at Antioch and became involved in the civil rights movement, participating in some of the first sit-ins in the northern United States.

Bob and Nancy moved to Wisconsin where Bob became a labor union organizer during the Kohler strike, one of the most famous and brutal labor strikes in U.S. history. Soon after, Bob and Nancy moved to Minnesota with their sons. There, they purchased a tax-forfeited farm on the edge of the Leech Lake Reservation where they planted trees, turning the fields to forest. He became a high school English teacher in Cass Lake and formed strong connections with countless members of the Leech Lake community. The Fairbanks and Wilson families of Ball Club, ceremonially adopted him and gave him an Ojibwe name-Waasegaabaw (Stands With the Light). He took a new job as community organizer for the Bemidji office of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (1963-66) and then as director of Red Lake's Community Action Program (1966-68).

Bob and Nancy eventually divorced, and a couple years later Bob married Margaret "Peggy" Seelye. Soon afterwards, Bob and Peggy moved to Washington, D.C. Bob worked for the office of Health, Education, and Welfare and then as director of personnel for the Office of Economic Opportunity (1968-78). During this time, Bob and Peggy had two children: Anton and David, and Bob wrote his first book: The Tree Farm. They

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home for over 60 years and never ceased nurturing the land, the community, and his family. He wrote more books here, including *Voyageur Country* and *Northwoods Window*. He was a newspaper columnist for the *Bemidji Pioneer* and the *Star Tribune*, a high school teacher at Red Lake, part of the marketing team at Bemidji State University, and was elected as Beltrami County Commissioner.

He had an affable and biting sense of humor. He proudly announced the birth of every one of his 26 grandchildren with the cry, "Another victory over Hitler!" In addition to grandchildren he has many great- and great-great-grandchildren. In spite of the many struggles and challenges he faced, Bob always had profound compassion for others and pride in his progeny, frequently clapping and shouting "bravo" at school concerts and events with tears in his eyes.

He took care of his neighbors, was a dispenser of wild rice, chokecherry jelly, and maple syrup, and was a dear friend and mentor to many. He is remembered for being an inveterate (and creative) storyteller, an advocate for Indian people, and-no matter the difficulties or dangers or indignities that life posed-a man who always believed in equality and justice. He will be deeply missed and long remembered.

Bob's wishes were to be cremated with a celebration of life ceremony planned for July 9, 2016, from 12 Noon to 4 p.m. in the Frohn

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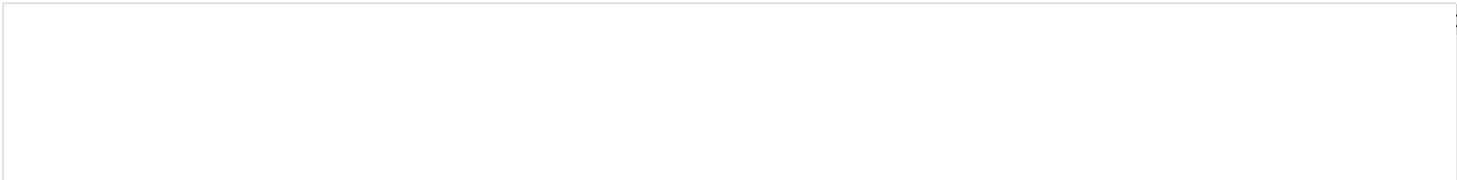


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