



AAC Publications

Robert Haskins Thomas ("Bob") Dodson, 1926–2022

Bob Dodson died on December 12, 2022 in White River Junction, Vermont. He was born on March 15, 1926, in Mount Vernon, New York, to Louise Swift Dodson and Captain Harry Leluce Dodson. Bob grew up around the world as his father served as a mechanical engineer aboard battleships in WWI and as chief engineer aboard aircraft carriers in WWII. Bob's most memorable homes were in Shanghai, China, and Baguio in the Philippines. He was educated at Phillips Exeter Academy, Harvard College, Dartmouth College, Harvard Business School, and the Centre des Études Industrielles in Geneva, Switzerland. He served in the Navy at the end of WWII.

Bob is best known as one of the last Antarctic explorers of the dog team era. He was an assistant geologist and dog team driver on the 1947-48 Ronne Antarctic Expedition, the last U.S. Antarctic expedition to use dog teams for land transportation. The Dodson Peninsula on the ice-bound Weddell Sea at the eastern base of Antarctica's Palmer Peninsula was named for his father.

While on a lengthy ski expedition to the Antarctic plateau in the winter of 1948, Bob and a colleague crossed a dangerous icefield riddled with crevasses. Suddenly his friend fell into the bottom of a 150-foot-deep crevasse and miraculously survived, though he was wedged upside down in the ice. In the darkness of a star-studded night, Bob skied across the jagged glacial landscape 12 miles to the expedition's base camp and then led a rescue team back to the crevasse. Bob was recognized for his bravery and orienteering skills.

Bob was a life-long Fellow of the Antarctic Society and served as the society's president in the 1980s. On his retirement in 1998, he again "went south," serving as a lecturer on cruise ships more than a dozen times over the years. He has been, since 1948, a fellow of the American Geographical Society, a member of the American Alpine Club, and for many years a member of the Alpine Club (London), the Himalayan Club (Mumbai), and the Swiss Alpine Club. Throughout his life, he was a keen mountaineer, having climbed in the Rockies and the Alps as well as in the Himalaya, where, in 1952, he organized and led an expedition into the high peaks of the Sikkim Himalaya in India.

After returning from Antarctica, Bob was invited by a friend to attend the Dartmouth Winter Carnival, where he met the love of his life, Gertrude "Robbie" Robertson, who was singing the Weaver's Song next to an ice sculpture. They were married at Grace Cathedral in San Francisco in 1950 and enjoyed 68 years of loving, adventure-filled marriage

After his wedding, Bob joined ALCAN, a large Canadian aluminum firm. He and spent two years at a company subsidiary, Indian Aluminum Company, in Kolkata, India. After six years in Chicago and St. Louis managing ALCAN's south-central sales office, he left ALCAN to become an executive at the Acco corporation in Ogdensburg, N.Y. He later served as general manager of the Bemis Company in Belgium and then as general manager of the Singer Company in Istanbul, Turkey. He later held positions with the U.S. Agency for International Development, as an attaché in the Persian Gulf for the Trade and Development Program, and later as Private Enterprise Development Officer at the U.S. embassy in Rabat, Morocco.

In 2018 Bob was predeceased by his beloved wife Robbie—the "light of my life," as he often called her. He was survived by three sons, each of whom was born in a different country: Harry, born in 1952 in Kolkata, India, and now living in Ashfield, Massachusetts; Philip, born in 1955 in Geneva, Switzerland, and now in the French village of Aleu in the foothills of the Pyrenees, and Christopher, born in

Brussels, Belgium, and now of Greenfield, Massachusetts. A fourth son, Nicholas, born in Illinois, predeceased him.

Images

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