

It's never too late for adventure

Bethyl and Bob Mayer: Autumn bloomers

Bethyl and Bob Mayer share a diverse past, an idyllic present and a bright future

There is a perceptive quote from author Susan Gayle that goes like this:

"In the garden of life, late bloomers are especially beautiful."

Bethyl and Bob Mayer are a couple of late bloomers. If you read on, you'll understand the accuracy of Susan's words.

While Bethyl and Bob had intriguing childhoods, their accomplishments seem to multiply as their lives progress.

Bethyl is the great-grand-daughter of a Mormon polygamist who was imprisoned during Utah's transition to statehood when he refused to give up any of his four wives.

When Bethyl was in her teens in Phoenix, Ariz., she had a brief friendship with a guy who played music in a local bar. She was too young to get into the bar, so she sat outside in the car. Her friend would come outside on his breaks to chat. That friend was Marty Robbins before his rise to fame.

While many young ladies would gladly give up their right arm, or their little brother, to have such a friend, Bethyl saw it as no big deal.

No big deal?

Maybe that's because Bethyl's life is defined by so much more.

She has realized many accomplishments during a season of life when most folks are coasting into retirement and winding down.

Bethyl finished a bachelor's degree in Classical Archeology at age 58.

She can take credit for identifying one piece of a mummy coffin in the Albany Institute of History and Art as belonging to Ankhefenmut, an Egyptian priest of the 21st dynasty, and linking it to other parts of the coffin, one in London and another in Vienna.

If you had visited the On Top of the World Craft Fair, you would have seen some of Bethyl's latest accomplishments.

She is a talented photographer, who loves to bring out the natural beauty found within the gates of our community and in Pinellas county.

She has found another outlet for her creativity by making thematic shadow-boxes using her neighbor, Brian's, cast off wooden cigar boxes.



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Getting to Know You

A monthly feature about the people in your
On Top of the World community

by John Koning

Bethyl also documents the adventures of her grandchildren and her outings with On Top of the World buddies Joy and Char by crafting elaborate and interesting photo books.

Now let's talk about Bob.

If you happen to meet Bob for the first time at one of his beloved line dancing classes, you might get the wrong impression of this man, whose dance technique could be described as a cross between Fred Astaire and a baby giraffe taking it's first steps.

In stark contrast to Bethyl's rural Utah childhood, Bob was raised as Catholic in a Jewish neighborhood in the Bronx, N.Y.

He was cared for by his Hungarian grandmother while his parents worked.

At age 55 he retired from a ca-

reer in New York State government and immediately launched into his second career teaching English as a second language.

Bob got his masters degree around the time he retired and convinced Bethyl to move to Barcelona, Spain. It didn't take any convincing really. Bethyl sold the house and her antique business and joined Bob for their European adventure.

After two years in Barcelona, Bob told Bethyl of his desire to return stateside to get his doctorate. She was supportive, as usual, and just plain Bob became Dr. Bob at age 61.

A prestigious Fullbright Fellowship followed and they were off to Slovenia for a year followed by another two in Budapest, Hungary.

If you think language was a problem for Bob, think again. Do

you remember Bob's Hungarian grandmother who cared for him as a child? That linguistic past paid off in spades!

Budapest was not the end of Bob's teaching career by any stretch. He and Bethyl returned home and he continued teaching at the University of New York at Albany until he was well into his 70s.

Bob regards himself as a perpetual student, delving into the kind of intellectual reading that would induce a coma in most of us. However, the love of learning is not the sum of the man. He is a hopeless billiards addict and he brings his flamboyant line dancing style to classes on both sides of Belcher Road.

A word to the wise, keep your distance from Bob's flailing limbs when the music starts. Bethyl got too close during a folk dance and paid for it with a sprained wrist. Despite his variable style scores, Bob gets straight A's for enthusiasm.

After 44 years of marriage, 85-year-old Bob and 81-year-old Bethyl can regularly be seen walking hand in hand next to Arbor Lake and talking about their next adventure.