

Robert Belzner Munn Globe and Mail, Published Sunday, Jan. 22, 2012 4:00PM EST



Husband, father, brother, grandfather, veteran, teacher, traveller, fisherman.
Born Aug. 8, 1921, in Hamilton.
Died Sept. 4, 2011, in Dundas, Ont.,
of prostate cancer, aged 90.

Growing up during the Depression, Bob Munn knew his family could not afford to send him to university. The oldest of Ernest and Caroline Munn's three children, he went to commercial school to learn office skills. At 16, he found an office job typing invoices. When he joined the army in 1943, he was assigned to the Signal Corps because of his typing skills. Stationed in England, Bob was in Aldershot on V-E Day and observed the infamous riot of Canadian troops. At war's end, the military let servicemen who were not in a rush to return to Canada stay and study in London. Bob chose electrical engineering. During every leave, he travelled around the British Isles.

In 1948, Bob joined Canada's Naval Reserve and spent summers on the east and west coasts. He was aboard the aircraft carrier HMCS Magnificent in 1949 when it ran aground off Port Mouton, N.S. He recalled looking out a porthole and seeing the shore coming too close and too fast, and knew that the ship was going aground. Bob was a lieutenant commander in the reserves in 1968 when the armed forces were unified. Rather than switch from the blue naval uniform to army greens, Bob retired. The Sea Cadets still wore the traditional blue uniforms so Bob became the commanding officer of RCSCC Dundas.

Back in Hamilton after the war, Bob had taken advantage of the army's offer to pay veterans' university tuition. At McMaster University studying honours physics and math, Bob met Edna Nicol, an elementary school teacher earning her degree. Bob persuaded Edna to marry him in 1950, and she persuaded him to become a teacher. After teaching in Toronto for a few years, Bob and Edna moved to Dundas, Ont., in 1959 with their three girls – Kathryn, Karen and Nancy. When Southmount High opened in Hamilton in 1962, Bob became the head of the math department. He stayed until his retirement in 1983. Known by students as "Mr. Math," Bob believed that everyone was capable of learning math, and that it should be fun.

After retiring, Bob had more time for woodworking and painting. He especially enjoyed spending time in his workshop with his grandchildren. He also loved travelling, first with Edna and then, after her death from cancer in 1992, with his second wife, Marion.

After being diagnosed with prostate cancer, Bob volunteered to support others with cancer. When Marion died of heart disease in 1998, Bob lost his zest for life, until he met Beth at a grief support group. They married two months later, the day before Bob's 89th birthday. Their love and devotion to one another was an inspiration to their children, stepchildren and grandchildren.

By Karen Munn and Nancy Kowalchuk, Bob's daughters.