

### The Arlene M. and Robert E. Hamilton Memorial Fund

Once every so often, a couple come along who truly leave a mark on their community. After moving to Bass Lake, Indiana, in the 1980s, Robert and Arlene Hamilton rolled up their sleeves, got involved in their new community, and made a difference; and the people of Starke County have benefitted from their contributions for decades.

Robert (Bob) Earl Hamilton was born on May 25, 1927 in Lincoln, Nebraska, to Earl Smith Hamilton and Stella Margaret (Qualset) Hamilton. He grew up in Lincoln, and was active in the Boy Scouts; he achieved the rank of Eagle Scout. At age 17, upon request, he received permission from his parents to enlist in the Navy during World War II. On May 11, 1945, Bob was sent to Great Lakes Naval Station in Great Lakes, Illinois. World War II ended on September 2, 1945, and he was honorably discharged a year later on August 28, 1946. His love of country remained with him all his life.



*Robert Hamilton, Naval Portrait*

After his time in the Navy, he went on to graduate from the University of Nebraska with a degree in Agricultural Studies. While at the University of Nebraska, he was a member of the Phi Psi Fraternity, the Innocents Honorary Society, and was an avid Cornhusker fan his entire life.



*Robert and Arlene at their wedding on August 8, 1948.*

Arlene M. Noble was born on August 26, 1929 to Lemuel and Sarah Frances (Young) Noble in Loretto, Nebraska. She was the fifth of ten children that all lived and worked on their family farm. Arlene graduated from Albion High School when she was 17 and began teaching in a one-room school house in Boone County the following fall. At the young age of 18, Arlene taught all the children in grades 1-8 who attended the little county school.

Robert and Arlene met on a very hot summer day at the wedding of Arlene's brother, Alton and Arlene's best friend. Arlene was the maid of honor on this special day and due to the heat, she fainted during the ceremony. She was caught from her fall by none other than Robert Hamilton himself and he stated that from that moment on he knew he had to get to know this beautiful young lady.

Robert and Arlene married on August 8, 1948 at the Methodist Church in Albion, Nebraska. Following their marriage, Arlene moved to Lincoln to be with Bob as he finished his studies at University of Nebraska. After graduating from college, the couple moved to Brewster, Nebraska.

After a few years in Brewster, Bob and Arlene moved to Valentine in Nebraska's Sandhill region. They moved there because Bob was offered the position of Secretary Manager of

the Sand Hills Cattleman's Association. It was here that he ambitiously ran for mayor, with Arlene faithfully by his side supporting him each step of the way. After an exciting journey and campaign, Bob became the youngest mayor in Nebraska history at age 24.

While in Valentine, working as the Secretary Manager, Bob and another member of the Cattleman's Association were instrumental in getting the Stetson hat company to name a hat style the "Sandhillier." Their daughter Kaye recalls, "The Sand Hills cattle were generally recognized as superior to those from any other part of the country." In fact, "Dad was given one of the first samples of the hat and was featured in an article in the *Omaha World Herald* modeling the Sandhillier." Bob continued to wear a Stetson and cowboy boots for the entire length of his career.

In 1954, Bob received a job offer in Chicago, Illinois. Upon being interviewed for the position by the President of the company, David H. Reimers, Bob was asked about his goals. His reply was that, "The only job worth having would be that of the Bank President." After taking a position at the company, Bob and Arlene moved their family to Hinsdale, Illinois, and Bob began working as an assistant cashier for the Livestock National Bank of Chicago.

Bob was a man of great determination and soon achieved the goal he had jokingly mentioned to Reimers during his interview. He worked his way up from his cashier position, to an officer, and then he became the youngest president of the Livestock National Bank at just 36 years old. At the time, the Livestock National Bank was at the center of financial activity in the Chicago Stock Yards. Shortly after gaining this prestigious position, Bob became a member of the Young President's Organization (YPO) of Chicago and was the organization's youngest inducted president at only 37 years old. He later served on the YPO board later on in life. In 1965, he then orchestrated a merger with Central National Bank in Chicago and served not only as the President of the Bank, but also as the Vice Chairman of the Board of the Central National Bank.

During this time, Arlene was extremely busy taking care of the couple's growing family. The couple had been blessed with two boys, Robert 'Bob' and Randall 'Randy', and a girl, whom they named Kaye.

In 1981, Bob and Arlene moved their family to Bass Lake, Indiana. It was here that he gained another presidential



Mayor Hamilton . . . Models Sandhillier.





title, this time as the President of Farmers Bank and Trust of Knox. Because Knox was a small rural town, Bob decided he had to do something to ensure the stability and growth of his new community and his bank. He began working to found an economic development organization, and his efforts eventually produced the Starke County Economic Development Foundation (SCEDF), which was established in 1985 in downtown Knox.

Bob believed that an active citizenry was what made a town strong. Bob worked hand-in-hand with other community members in the Starke County to strengthen the SCEDF and to ensure that the County and First Farmers Bank and Trust could prosper. After more than a decade, Bob retired from First Farmers in 1992.

After retiring, Bob and Arlene moved to Colorado Springs, Colorado in order to be closer to their children and grandchildren. By this time, Randy had married his wife Kathy, and they have two sons named Damen and Parker. Parker and his wife April have a daughter, Violet, and Damen married his wife, Stephanie.

Kaye married Philip Scott, and they have a daughter named Sarah and a son named Zach. They also have a daughter in law, Lauren (married to Zach.) Sarah, with her husband Rob Gillis has two daughters, Finlay and Lou.

Bob and his wife Mary have two sons named Jak and Sam. In all, Robert and Arlene had six grandchildren and this made them very happy.

Throughout the years, despite the fact that Bob and Arlene lived in several different locations, they were both very active in each community in which they lived.



*Robert and Arlene at a YPO event in Chicago in the 1960s*



*Robert and Arlene at their home on Bass Lake in 1989*



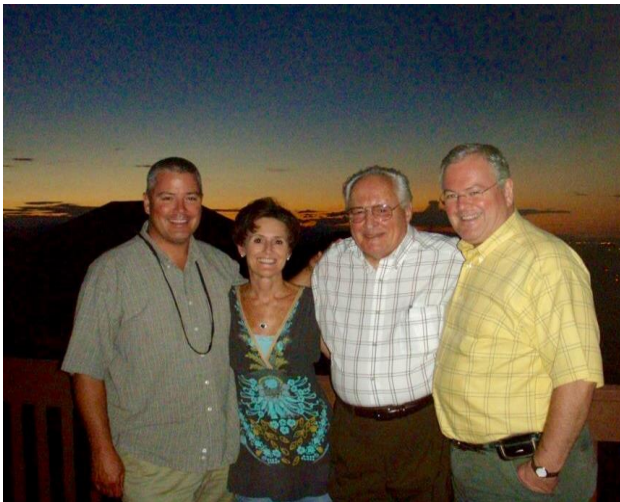
*Robert and Arlene in 1994*



*The Hamilton Family in 1996*

Arlene was a stay at home mom who was very supportive of Bob's career, her families activities, and her community. Her children remember her "strong willed and firm attitude" as well as her enthusiasm. Randy recalls, "She was very supportive of our father, of his creative ideas." Arlene participated in several clubs, community organizations, and groups including: the Republican Women's Club and the Order of Eastern Star, Minnehaha Chapter 26, as well as serving on the School Board, serving as a Scout mother, doing school fundraisers, and teaching Sunday school. She was also an active member of the P.E.O. Chapter of Knox, which works to educate and celebrate the advancement of women.

While serving various positions as an employee, mayor, president, and father, Bob was also a member of the American Legion, a Mason and a Shriner. In his spare time, Bob also enjoyed sailing with his children, and they have fond memories of sailing with him on Lake Michigan. Another major hobby that Bob enjoyed was building. He built the first two houses that his family lived in and continued to renovate and add on to their additional homes each time that they moved. He took great pride in making each aspect of his projects perfect and in addition to this, he did all of the plumbing and electric as well. He later passed all of these interests on to his son, Bob, who learned several different building trades from his father.



*Bob and his children in 2009*

Another hobby both Bob and Arlene enjoyed was flying; they both took lessons together starting in 1962. Bob went on to get his pilot's license, but Arlene had to quit taking lessons when she was near to being able to fly solo because she was too pregnant to fit behind the wheel! Later, Bob bought a Piper Cub airplane and flew regularly.

Their children recall how much both Arlene and Bob loved their country. Kaye remembers, "They were both strong patriots and believed in being active in your community to help keep those founding principles strong and alive in our nation. I believe he (Bob) gave all of us children . . . American flags to fly on our houses and made sure we knew proper flag etiquette."

After Arlene passed away on June 12, 1997, Bob started the Arlene M. Hamilton Memorial Fund in her honor. It supports the Coalition Against Domestic Abuse (CADA), which works to assist individuals and their children who are being abused or are in dangerous situations. Kaye remembers that her mom was quite concerned about the well-being of women in Knox who were in difficult situations. The fund continues the work that Arlene began in her community many years ago.

After Bob passed away on Feb. 25, 2011, their children changed the name of the fund to include Bob's name, and the fund now honors them both and their amazing legacy of public service.

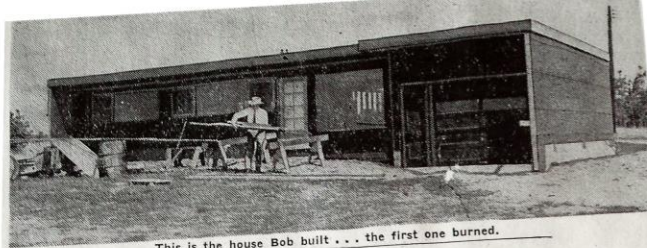




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WHERE GIVING GROWS

## Our Donor's Stories



This is the house Bob built . . . the first one burned.

### Valentine Mayor, 24, Cattle Association Official, Sand Hills Resident Only 2 Years

By Harold Cowan

World-Herald Staff Member  
 Valentine, Neb.—Nebraska's youngest mayor is a city-bred youth who took to the Sand Hills like a maverick calf to its mother, and vice versa.

Born and reared at Lincoln, Robert E. Hamilton this month became Mayor of Valentine a scant two years after arriving as a stranger. He is 24.

As secretary-manager of the Sand Hills Cattle Association, he has become known throughout the area. Said a Valentine business leader Saturday:

"Bob has fine leadership qualities. He's a real addition to our community."

Son of Mr. and Mrs. Earl Hamilton, he zipped through Teachers College High at Lincoln in two years, with extra credit for top grades.

He earned his way the second year when his dad switched from car dealer at Lincoln to rancher at Petersburg, Boone County. Bob worked at a Boy Scout camp, helped a veterinary.

Good grades brought college scholarships from University Regents and the Elks. At University of Nebraska College of Agriculture, he was a member of the Innocents, president of the Corn Cobs (men's pep group), president of the Block and Bridle

(animal husbandry) and member of Phi Kappa Psi social fraternity.

He enlisted in the Navy in 1945 and finished his schooling in 1949. His dad returned to the auto business and moved to Norfolk.

"I had a few cattle at the ranch," Bob said. "I guess I always liked the Sand Hills. It's clean and fresh out here and the people are wonderful. I like their independent spirit."

For nine months he taught a veterans' group at Brewster. The Sand Hills Cattle Association, with a membership of about six hundred, hired him in April, 1950.

He moved his family to Valentine. His wife is the former Arlene Noble of Loretta, Neb. Their children are Randall Allen and Janet Kaye.

Bob, a handsome, black-haired six-footer, quickly set out to build their house himself. He had no carpentry experience. He put in all his spare time for about 18 months and was almost done when the house burned.

He promptly started another, saving about 40 per cent by doing the labor. He designed it himself, including many modern touches. It is nearing completion.

Why did he run for Mayor? "Young people should help provide some of the answers," he said. "I'm interested in politics generally. I think all young people should be."

In the largest primary vote ever recorded at Valentine, he defeated A. L. Palling, 666-379. Mr. Palling, retired cattleman, had been Mayor twice. The incumbent, J. W. Harvey, did not run.

Said Mayor Hamilton: "I see already that a public official gets a lot of pressure put on him."

