

## TOM BELL

## CLASS OF '65

Except for a few years away for travel or work, I can say North Vancouver has always been my home. I feel a sense of pride and privilege to be born, raised, lived, worked and now retired here on the North Shore. I had a blue collar Mom and Dad who believed in Canada and all of its promise. North Vancouver General Hospital must have been a busy place back in 1947, cranking out all us baby boomers and future students of North Vancouver High School.

Half way through grade twelve I realized my days were numbered in the education system and I had no desire to work at the Super Value where my boss offered me a full time job on graduation. After grad I worked in a local sawmill and saved enough money to book my passage on the next ship to Australia. My Dad insisted I buy a return ticket. He was a wise man.

So I was off to see the world, starting with my first trip that lasted fourteen months, part of which was done with my old school pal, Bill Sim, to Australia and New Zealand. On my return, I felt I really accomplished something, which set the stage for my second trip around the globe a few years later.

In the meantime, I had a short-lived but exciting career in commercial diving doing construction work in and around Lake Ontario and the BC Coast. I learned hardhat diving from my boss, finishing my course in May of 1968. My diving skills served me well as a moonlighting job and much loved hobby, later on in life.

My charmed life continued with my second trip, lasting thirteen months and taking me all the way around the world, with stops in Europe, Middle East, Afghanistan, India, South East Asia and eventually back to Australia. On my return from the South Seas, and only two weeks after getting home, I had the good fortune to be hired on to the West Vancouver Fire Dept. I landed that all important job with a pension at the end, of what became a thirty year career. The fire service was a great fit for me.

My good luck extended well beyond my firefighting career when I met my wife, Nancy, who became the mother of our two boys, Sean and Ryan. Why was I so lucky? I had understanding parents, a great wife, good kids, traveled the world, had a successful career, comfy home, and over the years I have enjoyed a long list of wonderful friends.

I'm also grateful to my ole school pal, Jean Loggie, who nominated me for the Queen's Jubilee Medal for Community Service in 2000. It was an honour to be included in those proceedings. My volunteer work has been a great source of entertainment and pride over the years. Finishing the West Vancouver Fire Museum was one of my signature accomplishments. Helping out with the "North Van High, Class of '65 and Friends" reunions has been great fun. A privilege, that allowed me to keep in touch with many of my long time school pals, some of which go all the way back to elementary school.

I wish North Vancouver High School Grads the best of luck and happiness.