

Robert (Bob) Tallon Dakan



Robert (Bob) Tallon Dakan, a retired Senior Foreign Service officer and career mentor, passed away peacefully on October 29, 2023, at his home in Falls Church, Va. He was 84 years old.

Born on September 19, 1939, in Santa Cruz, Ca., Bob was the son of Helen and George Dakan. Growing up on the coast, Bob became a lifeguard and avid surfer, a passion that kept him young in body and mind well into his later years.

After graduating from Santa Cruz High School, Bob studied dentistry and boxed for two years at the University of San Francisco. But his affinity for sports and coaching led him to San Jose State, where he also played volleyball and earned a bachelor's degree in physical education in 1961.

In 1963, inspired by President John F. Kennedy, Bob joined the Peace Corps. He served in Semarang, Indonesia. During his two years there, he met Damayati (Maya) Djoyoadingrat. In late 1965, they were married in a service not far from where Maya was born, in Oegstgeest, the Netherlands. By late 1966, Bob had joined the Foreign Service, and he and Maya moved to Laos, where they started a family and stayed for the next eight years, only leaving the country when USAID exited in 1975.

From that point forward, Bob's career was dedicated to public service. He either worked directly for or contractually with USAID in Laos, Burkina Faso, Nepal, Indonesia, Thailand and Belize. He also served in Washington, D.C., as the Pakistan Desk Officer, and earned a mid-career, USAID-supported graduate degree in Agricultural Economics from Stanford University.

Bob retired from the Foreign Service in 1999, following his posts as Mission Director in Belize and Office Director in the Latin America and Caribbean Bureau. But he continued to work with USAID, including once again in Indonesia, following Timor Leste's independence in 2002 and the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004, where he was particularly invested in sustainable coffee enterprises in Timor and in the (re)construction of the 175-km Aceh Road in North Sumatra.

From 2008 to 2023, Bob continued to give back, but this time as a career coach to new entrants to the USAID Foreign Service, helping to guide them through the organization's ever-evolving structure and culture. He has maintained lasting connections with many of those colleagues, often offering support and guidance throughout their career trajectories.

Bob is survived by Maya, his two daughters, Lana and Sinta, their families, including four grandchildren, and his brother, Don Dakan. He will be remembered by many for his unwavering dedication to and firmly held belief in the value of public service. Family and friends across generations will also remember him for his warmth, curiosity, caring and humor.

See <https://www.bobdakan.net/>

USAID NOTICES

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Passing of Robert “Bob” Dakan, Retired Senior Foreign Service Officer and Career Candidate Corps (C3) Coach

The Office of Human Capital and Talent Management (HCTM) announces with great sadness the passing of our great friend, colleague, and mentor, Robert “Bob” Dakan.

A retired Senior Foreign Service Officer (FSO), Bob’s development career spanned nearly 60 years, always welcoming the challenge of trying to help others move toward what we take for granted. As one of the first Peace Corps volunteers, Bob met President John F. Kennedy at a ceremony in the Rose Garden before his departure for Indonesia. President Kennedy asked what he was going to do while in the Peace Corps. As always, Bob had a sharp response at the ready: He was going to coach basketball. Even though the President laughed, Bob did go on to do just that, becoming one of the first basketball coaches in the Peace Corps. Bob’s time in Indonesia was memorable on multiple accounts: Not only did he live through the coup, known as the “year of living dangerously,” he also met his wife, Damayati “Maya” Djoyoadhiningrat.

Bob served over 37 years in the USAID Foreign Service (FS), creating and managing development programs in Asia, Africa, and Central America. He supervised a large technical staff, providing environmental management, alternative energy, disaster assistance, agriculture and private sector development in Indonesia, Timor-Leste, Thailand, Laos, Nepal, Burkina Faso, and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) regional programs in Southeast Asia.

His career provided many memorable experiences. While serving in Laos and following the communist government’s rise to power in 1975, Bob worked with a small USAID team to close down the Mission. At one point, insurgents seized control of the compound, preventing him from leaving. He, however, found his way to another exit by casually walking out of the back door of the compound, which the insurgents had forgotten to guard. While posted to Indonesia in 1982, Bob and his team began working on a decentralization program; he later witnessed some of those programs become part of the Indonesian government’s new decentralization law in 1998. Bob also served in Washington as the Indonesia and Pakistan Desk Officer. He retired in 1999 after serving as Mission Director in Belize and Office

Director for Caribbean Affairs in the Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC).

During his retirement, Bob continued to work with USAID's programs in Southeast Asia. In Timor-Leste, he worked on the re-establishment of the coffee cooperatives and the launch of USAID's program following the country's independence. In the aftermath of the destructive 2004 tsunami in the Indian Ocean, Bob helped with the rebuilding of the 175-kilometers Aceh road in North Sumatra in Indonesia, advising the major reconstruction contractor and liaising with the government of Indonesia.

In 2008, Bob returned to USAID-Washington, DC as a coach for new FSOs, a role he held for the next 15 years. Part of his advice to those he coached included "Lots of interesting things will happen to you during your career with USAID." Notwithstanding the world events he witnessed during his career, he was keen to point out that "interesting things" could include surfing in the warm waters of Bali. He had surfed for many years in Northern California near his hometown of Santa Cruz.

Bob was a natural polyglot, speaking fluent Thai, Lao, and Bahasa Indonesia. He would impress native speakers with his ability to converse with ease. He received a Master of Arts in Agricultural Economics from Stanford University's Food Research Institute.

Bob is survived by his wife Maya; two daughters, Lana and Sinta, and their families, including four grandchildren; and his brother Don.

Bob was a legend within the Agency. He was a genuinely kind and caring person who always looked for the good in people. We will miss his humor, wit, and support. To reflect more on his legacy or to share your memories of Bob, please visit his [memorial website](#).

Any questions concerning this notice may be directed to:

-- Service Central for HR, HCTM, (202) 712-1234, Option 2, hr-helpdesk@usaid.gov

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