

Bob Mathers Ford Dealership

Boyne City Michigan

Robert G. Mathers, born December 16, 1928, in Boyne City Michigan, at 801 South Lake Street. His parents were Robert Frank Mathers and Georgana (Pangborn) Mathers.

Just a small side note from Bob about his dad; In 1936 Bob's father, Robert F. Mathers, bought a 1935 demo of a two-door Ford from the Northern Auto dealership trading in a cow, a 1929 Chevrolet Coupe, and some cash. To close the deal Bob's father then walked the cow to Deer Lake, where John Parker, the dealership manager, had a farm. Only in early Northern Michigan!

Bob worked at Northern Auto Company, in Boyne City, during his high school years before moving to Flint. He went into the military following his family's tradition. Bob made Corporal, served in the Army as a helicopter mechanic in Korea from 1950 through 1952.

His family members also served in the military:

- Pvt. R. Frank Mathers, Bob's father, served in the First World War.
- Cpl. Larry G. Mathers, Bob's brother, served in the Vietnam War.
- Major Russell F. Mathers, Bob's nephew, served in Desert Storm, and Yugoslavia.

Major Russell Mathers, flying as Command Pilot, holds the longest flight record for a B-52. They flew from Barksdale Air Force Base in Louisiana, dropping bombs on Iraq and returning without landing on January 16 and 17, 1991. Their flight, refueling in the air several times, lasted more than 35 hours. This world record is recorded in the Guinness Book of Records. His ship is on display at Elgin Air Force Base, Valparaiso, Florida. All four members of the family were recipients of many honors and awards for exemplary military service.



While living and working in Flint he met and married Shirley Cunningham. They were married in her hometown of Charlevoix on December 19, 1953. Bob and Shirley started their family in Flint where Cheri, Trish and Wendy were born. In 1962 they returned to Boyne, where Bob Jr. was born.

Bob and Shirley were highly active in the Boyne community. They were founding members of the Model A Club in 1964. They joined the Boyne Country Antique Auto Club in 1965, remaining active for years. Whenever there were three or more old car buffs gathering, you could count on finding Bob Mathers, Bud Sabin, and Harvey Varnum to be in the thick of things. Bob's restored cars won many awards at the Old Car Show by Lake Charlevoix and around the area. On the 4th of July, the garage was always

full of old cars preparing for the Boyne City parade. Bob and his son Robert were both old car enthusiasts.

He was also a member of the Boyne City Masonic Lodge 391 F&AM, being raised to the sublime degree of a Master Mason in 1968.

I would stop into the dealership and visit with Bob, and I remember on one visit. after asking how he enjoyed semi-retirement. he said, "I want more time to spend with my grandchildren and take them fishing." When conversing with Bob you could feel, see, and hear the pride and love he had for his children and grandchildren. The rogue's gallery of pictures in his office attested to this.

Once when I had my vehicle in for service, I left the garage and it needed to be moved. As I had inadvertently left my German shepherd inside. He was very protective and displayed a very toothy smile. No one was willing to move him.

Bob's friend Bud Sabin went over, opened the door, put his hand on the puppy's nose, and said "Move over," sat down and moved it. Bob's reaction was "Only Bud!"

Bob Mathers Ford originated September 22, 1917, as the Northern Auto Company in Boyne City at 224 East Water Street. He started operating Mathers Sinclair, the service and gas station at 102 South Lake Street, which was located at the Southwest corner of Water and Lake Street. I remember this well as when I came to Boyne in 1962 his station was where I took my first car purchased from Harry Atkins Chevrolet to be checked before I paid for it. It needed work as there was a mix of sparkplugs and the brakes were not adjusted.

An item from the past, Vintage gas station Arco service drinking cup from Boyne City.



Bob quietly supported his town and his friends. When I needed a vehicle for the Boyne 4th of July parade, to be used with the Boyne City Boy Scouts Troop #49, Bob always provided one. Also, when an emergency came to pass, he was there as well.



102 South Lake Street

One of Bob's old cars "1930 Buick Roadster"

In 1972 they purchased it to Ford Body Shop and started their venture in the Ford Automotive field.

Bob and Shirley decided to buy the Ford Dealership when Bob's wife answered Bob's question of "Will you help run it with me?" Obviously, she said "yes."

In 1973 they purchased the Ford Dealership from Dick Cote' and changing the name from Dick Cote' Ford to Bob Mathers Ford. Previously the dealership had been named and owned by:

Northern Auto Company September 22, 1917 – June 17, 1936

Dealership restricted for lack of sales volume 1936 – 1947.

Northern Auto Company February 18, 1947 – March 7, 1963

Boyne Valley Motors March 7, 1963 – September 1, 1970

Dick Cote' Ford September 1, 1970 – October 4, 1973

Bob Mathers Ford October 4, 1974 - today

The Mathers and their family have run the dealership ever since 1974.

Today it is one of the oldest Ford dealerships in the Northern Michigan area

In 2017 they received the 100-year award from the Ford Motor Company.





This is the oldest picture I have found showing the Ford and Ford Tractor garage. It was taken from the roof of the Odd Fellows building. Please note the Cities Service gas pump is located on the sidewalk along Water Street and the Hi-Speed station across the corner from the Post Office. High Speed gas was renamed Pure around 1950.

They sold the service station building on Lake and Water Street to William Lindsay in 1975. Mr. Lindsay moved his insurance office from the Boyne City Bank to the building which he had remodeled. It then was the Campbell Lindsay Ins., the Lindsay Hubble Ins., the Hubble Ins., the Korthase Lindsay Ins., the Old Kent Bank and today this is the location of the Fifth Third Bank.



Trumble Construction remodeled the building. The new facade looks good and is in keeping with the new trend for downtown Boyne.





The dealership includes outside car sales areas.

The Body Shop that was purchased in 1972 has been extensively remodeled and now has a modern look complementing the Boyne area.

Mathers Body Shop

The modern parts department the largest car service area in Boyne.

Service Managers:

- 1973-1975 Tim Seeyle
- 1976-1979 Nick Reed
- 1980-1981 Jim Schumann
- 1981-1987 Bob Mathers Jr.
- 1988-1989 Terry Elder
- 1990-1991 Rick McGrath
- 1992-2000 Hugh Smith
- 2001- Mike Sliwinski

Parts Department:

- Ken Cain
- Wendy (Mathers) Reidel
- Pat Osborn

- George McKenney

Unfortunately, at times, the greatest level of mankind has taken its toll. In April 2005 Boyne City lost Bob, and in March 2008 his wife Shirley passed away.

After Bob's passing the family retained Bob's office as he kept it and it is open for use as a conference room and retains the memorabilia and pictures that Bob collected over many years.



Today the dealership remains Bob Mathers Ford and is under the direction of Bob's son Robert A. Mathers, General Manager and Bob's daughter Wendy (Mathers) Reidel, Office Manager. Robert has been with the dealership since 1981 and Wendy 1979. The four children Robert, Cheri, Trish, and Wendy own the dealership.

The Mathers family remains focused on service to Boyne City and her residents. Please stop by and visit with Bob and Wendy, they enjoy reminiscing about the Mathers family.

Edward May III

Curmudgeonly Historian