

'Palouse prairie restoration pioneer' dies at 101

Maynard Fosberg's 22 acres of prime real estate on Moscow's east side will remain undeveloped

By Garrett Cabeza
Daily News staff writer

Besides being kind, enthusiastic and soft spoken, 101-year-old Moscow resident Maynard Fosberg was a "Palouse prairie restoration pioneer," according to Palouse Land Trust Executive Director Lovina Englund.

"He just was probably one of the most charming gentlemen that I've ever had an opportunity to be acquainted with, and, of course, we know that he had a big ripple effect in our community,"



Margaret Fosberg

Englund said.

Fosberg died Sept. 18 in Coeur d'Alene because of the "effects of the coronavirus," according to his obituary that ran in the Sept. 22 edition of the Daily News.

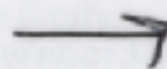
Fosberg and his wife Margaret of more than 68 years moved to Moscow in 1947, his obituary said. He worked as a University of Idaho soils professor from 1947 until his retirement in 1989.

During his time at the UI,

See **PIONEER**, Page 6A



Geoff Crimmins/Daily News file
Maynard Fosberg works in the garden outside his home in Moscow in this photograph taken in 2012.



Pioneer

From Page 1A

he developed the largest soils monolith collection in the U.S. with 234 total soils monoliths and contributed to the World Soil Monolith collection in the Netherlands.

He purchased his residence and more than 20 accompanying acres at the intersection of Mountain View Road and D Street for about \$12,500 in 1951, according to a 2019 Daily News story.

The property was outside the Moscow city limits and surrounded by several acres of farmland when he and his wife purchased the property. It would be 2001 — or 50 years after he purchased the property — that it was annexed into the city.

While dense residential neighborhoods have sprung up around Fosberg's property, 22 acres of Fosberg's property is under a conservation easement with the Palouse Land Trust, ensuring the land will retain its natural, scenic and agricultural function and provide valuable open space, according to an informational sign on his property.

"I just love this place," Fosberg said in the 2019 Daily News story. "The fact that it's always going to be preserved is really neat."

Englund said the original 17-acre conservation easement was established in 1999 and Fosberg added five acres in 2010.

"His heart was really in preserving a small piece of the Palouse landscape, so he created a reconstructed Palouse prairie field up there essentially," England said. "He



In this photo taken in 2014, Maynard Fosberg talks about the native plants he has been cultivating outside his Moscow home.

Geoff Crimmins
Daily News file

planted that back to native vegetation and now it's just like this incredible haven for pollinators and wildlife up there. He was basically like a Palouse prairie restoration pioneer and was really dedicated to showcasing what landowners could do if they were dedicated to their heritage of the Palouse landscape."

Brenda Erhardt, Latah Soil and Water Conservation District conservation planner, said she worked with Fosberg on his prairie restoration and pollinator habitat project.

Erhardt said "his enthusiasm was contagious" and "he just never lost his joy for life."

Mary Barnes Ralston said she first met Fosberg's wife when Barnes Ralston was a freshman sorority member at Alpha Gamma Delta. Margaret Fosberg was president of the sorority house corporation board, a position Barnes Ralston eventually took over.

"They're a loss to the community," Barnes Ralston said of Maynard and Margaret Fosberg.

She said the Fosberg couple spent many summers working on the Alpha Gamma Delta house.

"They were always there for people," Barnes Ralston said. Margaret Fosberg died in March 2016.

The Rev. Norman Fowler with Moscow First Presbyterian Church, the church Maynard Fosberg was a member, said the main thing that comes to mind when thinking about Fosberg was the man talking about doing irrigation as a child on his family farm in Turlock, Calif. That experience fueled his interest in soils.

"That became something he did most of his life except for a bit while he was in the military during World War II," Fowler said.

Verna Bergmann, a deacon at Moscow First Presbyterian

Church, said Fosberg had a lot of years to go despite his age.

"He was just an incredible 100-year-old man," she said.

Bergmann said Fosberg was great at listening and responding in conversation.

"It was so easy to talk with him," she said.

Public Health-Idaho North Central District has reported no deaths from the coronavirus in Latah County. Tara Macke, PH-INCD public information officer, said in an email that the district has not received confirmed notification of a COVID-19-related death in Latah County.

She wrote that the process for the state of Idaho to officially report the deaths to public health districts can take several days or weeks to ensure accuracy.

Garrett Cabeza can be reached at (208) 883-4631, or by email to gcabeza@dnnews.com.