

# Bob Freudenstein



Some young men with political aspirations are born into families with law school as a prerequisite, but few, quite by accident, found their calling like Bob Freudenstein did. In the psychedelic era of the Strawberry Alarm Clock playing on the radio, Freudenstein found himself working as a shoes salesman in his late 20s. When Kitsap County Commissioner Bill Mahan called him about the vacant County Clerk position, the job of County Clerk looked pretty good from his perspective.

Mahan, a former milkman, knew what it was like to start from meager beginnings and thought Freudenstein would be a perfect fit. Mahan encouraged Bob to apply for the position. The other commissioners agreed with him and he was selected to fill the shoes of Margaret Smith. From the very beginning Freudenstein jumped in full throttle. His first day at work provided a shocking revelation, the clerk's office did not have a cash register and all its money being kept in a shoe box, which was amusing considering his last occupation! He remedied that

immediately by purchasing the best register available. This was just the tip of the iceberg for a tenure that would last a quarter of a century.

Freudenstein quickly realized he needed to be the first County Clerk who did not work at the front counter. He used his time wisely with his common sense skillset and implemented much needed newer technology. On the bright side of the spectrum, the Beatles were still together in 1969; on the lesser side, the clerks were still transcribing court minutes into large ledger books. It took the office ten more years to transition to a statewide computer case management system. Implementing that dramatic change was not an easy undertaking, but Freudenstein and his staff persevered and then some.

The number of Clerk's Office employees grew from 9 to 33 to handle the five additional Judges added during his 28-year tenure. He envisioned a paperless court more than twenty years before it would finally come to pass; which was finally brought about in 2016. Someone is not re-elected seven times without being politically savvy and Bob had the pleasure of meeting John Kennedy, Hubert Humphrey, Senator Henry (Scoop) Jackson and Bill Clinton.





# 25 years of public service for Clerk Bob Freudenstein

*"Bob is a true dedicated public servant. Public service means everything to him."*

**Madelyn Botta**  
Superior Court Administrator

5/94

*"He's a real asset to the bench, and he's a real asset to our bar association."*

**Bill Crawford,**  
President Kitsap Co. Bar

*"We have an excellent working relationship. He takes a lot of pressure off us."*

**Judge Leonard Kruse**  
Superior Court

*"He goes out of his way to respond to what will work well for the public and what will work well for his staff."*

**Karen Flynn,**  
Auditor

For the last 25 years, County Clerk Bob Freudenstein has played a vital role in keeping the court system functioning smoothly.

His efforts, and the helpful attitude conveyed by his staff, have earned high marks with lawyers, judges and the general public.

On May 1 from 2-5 p.m. at Givens Community Center, Freudenstein's quarter century of public service will be recognized with a special celebration.

"I truly believe I've got the best job in the county," says Freudenstein. "This is a good job of public service is what you believe in."

Freudenstein was appointed to his post May 1, 1969 to fill an unexpired term. He acknowledges it was a political appointment, but says he thinks he got the job because he did extensive research about it beforehand.

He has been elected six times since, twice without opposition, and it has never been close.

Now the senior County Clerk in the state,

administering their caseload, Freudenstein has the added duties of Jury Commissioner, managing jurors for Superior and District Court, as well as Municipal Courts in the county under contract.

Over his 25 years of service, Freudenstein has seen the staff grow from about 10 persons serving 2½ judges to 30 serving seven judges. Technological changes have resulted in computerized tracking of all court documents, and a linkup with a state network through the Superior Court Management Information System.

He anticipates the day of the "paperless court," a concept he first heard advocated in a seminar 22 years ago.

Meanwhile, Freudenstein looks forward to campaigning for re-election this year, although he hasn't formally announced yet.

Sharing Bob's spotlight May 1 will be his wife of 12 years, Linda, who works in Administrative Services. They were introduced through a friend of Bob's, Snohomish County Clerk Kay Anderson, who was Linda's boss at the time.

All employees are invited to attend the celebration and honor Bob.



## GETTING TO KNOW US

Freudenstein is generally recognized as one of the most knowledgeable persons in his field. He became a fellow of the Institute for Court Management in 1989 and was named statewide Clerk of the Year in 1990.

Freudenstein is most proud of his 1978 Liberty Bell Award, granted by the local bar association to any person for outstanding contributions to the law.

The Clerk's Office keeps track of all documents filed in Superior Court and assists the judges in

**If you would like to attend the 25-year anniversary celebration for Bob Freudenstein, May 1 from 2-5 p.m. at Givens, please R.S.V.P. by April 18 to Shirley Johnson, 895-3171. Tickets are \$15 singles, \$25 couples. Checks should be made payable to Freudenstein Anniversary and mailed to P.O. Box 1797, Port Orchard WA 98366.**





Staff photo by Brad Camp

Kitsap County Clerk Bob Fruedenstein shares a warm hug with outgoing County Commissioner Billie Eder during a party Sunday to celebrate Fruedenstein's 25th year in office.

## 'Mr. Courthouse' Bob Fruedenstein looks ahead to another term as clerk

By Lloyd D. Brown  
Staff writer

He's the closest thing to a local legend still sitting in the Kitsap County courthouse office. And he wants four more years.

Kitsap County Clerk Bob Fruedenstein celebrated 25 years in office Sunday, May 1, by announcing he would seek another term.

The party and fundraiser was notable for an all-star guest list that included state Supreme Court Justice Richard Guy, Secretary of State Ralph Munro, State Auditor Brian Sonntag and Congressman Norm Dicks (D-6th District).

Through the years, Fruedenstein has brushed shoulders with some of the biggest names in politics, but he says it was one little-known lawmaker from Massachusetts who first got him involved in politics. It was 1960 and Fruedenstein was working as a manager of a chain of Southern California service stations when his boss got tickets to a \$100-a-plate dinner.

"I wanted to go just to see what a \$100-a-plate dinner looked like," Fruedenstein re-

membered. (It turned out to be the stereotypical benefit dinner: cold peas and rubber chicken.)

"But the candidate was John Kennedy," Fruedenstein said. "That's when I got involved."

After returning to the Bremerton area where he had graduated from high school, Fruedenstein began working on state and local campaigns. When the county clerk position came open, Fruedenstein's name was placed on the ballot with Ruth Weatherill (mother of Port Orchard Mayor Leslie "Jay" Weatherill) and long-time community leader Leroy Williams of Bremerton.

Twenty-five years and six elections later, Fruedenstein said he has never met an opponent he didn't like.

He has witnessed the growth of the court system firsthand, from 2-1/2 Superior Court judges and 10 clerk's office employees in 1969 to seven judges and 33 employees today.

Fruedenstein says his most treasured prize is the Liberty Bell Award, given by the Kitsap County Bar Association for his contribution to the local legal system. He also was the only county clerk in the state twice

elected president of the state association. In 1990, he was named Clerk of the Year.

Fruedenstein says his grandmother was most impressed that he knew the late Senator Warren Magnuson.

"When my grandmother found out I knew Warren Magnuson my stock in the family went way up," Fruedenstein said. "He was a great man — a politician's politician."

Kind of like Fruedenstein, who is regarded as the man in the know when it comes to the workings of the Kitsap County Courthouse. Perhaps it's his sense of humor that makes Fruedenstein the man to see for visiting public officials passing through town.

"It's only important for them to *think* you know where the bodies are buried," he said. "I wish I knew as much as people think I do."

What he does know is this: public officials would do well to remain true to their purpose.

"Public service is still a very good profession," Fruedenstein said. "As long as you don't forget who nabs you."



## KITSAP COUNTY

# Freudenstein goes for 7th term

By Julie McCormick  
Sun Staff

Kitsap County Clerk Bob Freudenstein has announced his intention to seek a seventh term in his job administering the records of the Superior Court.

Freudenstein, 55, has held office longer than any other elected county official. He was first appointed in 1969 to fill the unexpired term of his predecessor.

Freudenstein is an affable politico who seems to know everyone and everything despite his low-profile, non-policy job of administering court records and case documents.

At a recent celebration of his 25th anniversary in office, guests included Richard Guy, justice of the State Supreme Court; Gerry Alexander, judge of the Court of Appeals; State Treasurer Dan Grimm; U.S. Rep. Norm Dicks, D-Bremerton, and 26th District Rep. Ron Meyers, D-Port Orchard. State Auditor Brian Sonntag was master of ceremonies.

Four retired Superior Court judges are his campaign chairmen.

Why should people vote for him after all these years in office?

"They should vote for anybody who's demonstrated that public service is what they like to do and is what they're good at," Freudenstein answers readily.

The most profound change he's seen in courthouse operations during his 25 years in office, says Freudenstein, is the arrival of the computer age.

When he first took office, clerks were still transcribing court minutes into large books. Now, he's looking forward to the optical imaging technology that will allow all documents to be nearly instantly available on computer, "the first real step to the paperless court."

Several million dollars a year

pass through the Clerk's office — fines, fees and payments that are variously invested, transferred into the general fund or, like child support, paid back out again.

Freudenstein's list of professional achievements and honors include several innovative procedural "firsts" for county clerks that made life easier for both staff and citizens.

For instance: the one day/one trial system of jury service in which potential jurors spend no more than a day waiting to be called. If they're not empaneled the first day, they're through.

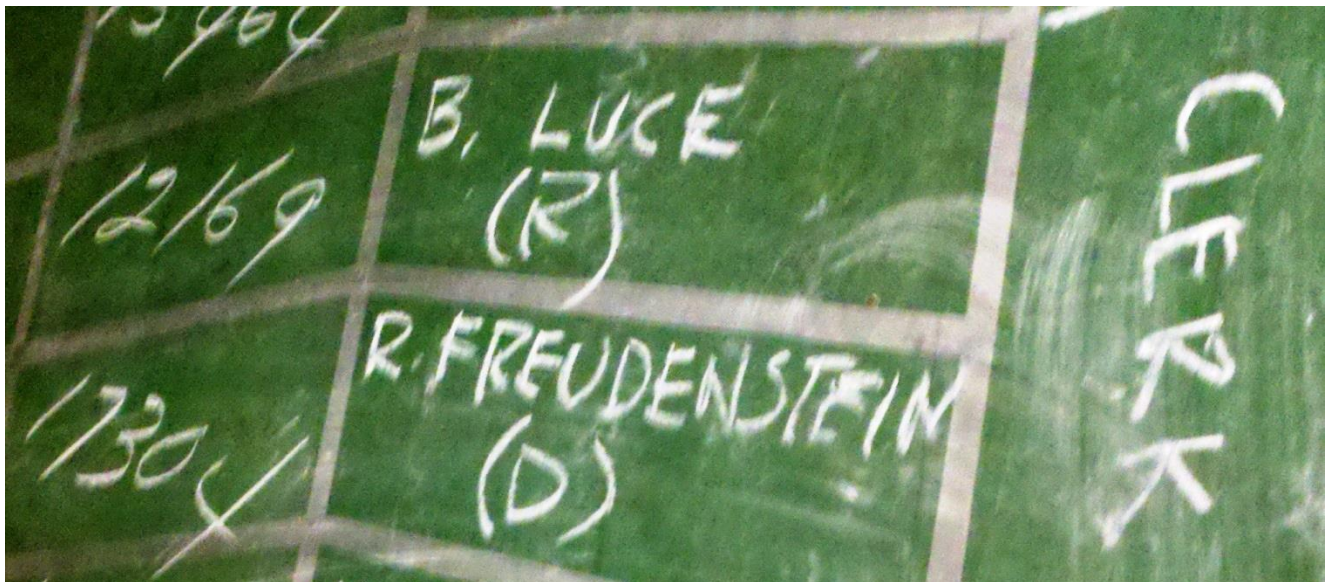
He's been elected twice as president of the Washington State Clerks' Association, received the local Bar Association's Liberty Bell award in 1978 for outstanding contributions to the legal system and was voted by state clerks as Clerk of the Year in 1990.

The job pays \$60,070 per year.

Freudenstein and his wife Linda have five children between them and eight grandchildren.



FREUDENSTEIN



(1976 Elections chalk board)



# Public service has always been Bob Freudenstein's #1 goal

## County's longest-serving elected official is retiring

The Clerk's Office without Bob Freudenstein? It's almost unimaginable. Yet come Jan. 1, he'll be gone—the County's most senior elected official, the most senior County Clerk in the state and, perhaps more importantly, one of the most popular bosses in County government.

It's clear he'll be missed by his staff, by colleagues in the Courthouse, and by colleagues throughout the state, many of whom gathered Nov. 10 at President's Hall to honor and roast him. The comments of some of them appear at right.

Bob has been elected to office seven times in a career that spanned nearly 29 years. The secret to his success, in his own words: *"This is a public service job. My credo throughout my career has been to be a good public servant and not to forget who I work for."*

And, referring to his hard-working staff, he adds: *"These people here all reflect that attitude. They are good public servants. They're a terrific group and I'll miss them."*

Bob is retiring a year before his term is up, and his successor will be chosen by the County Commissioners from three persons nominated by the Kitsap County Democratic Central Committee.

He plans to hit the road in January with his wife, Linda, and become an RV'er for awhile. "Linda and I would like to travel while we're still young enough and have our health to enjoy it," he says. At the top of their agenda is the Northeast and Boston, the only major U.S. city Bob hasn't visited.

Many County employees will remember Linda Freudenstein, who for several years was office manager for Debbie Broughton in DAS. She retired three years ago, but has showed up from time to time to fill in. Bob was introduced to her by Kay Anderson, the Snohomish County Clerk.

The honors Bob has accumulated during his career are numerous. The most recent is the Distinguished Public Service Award, which took him by surprise during the annual conference of the Washington Association of County Officials. He is also proud of the Liberty Bell Award he received from the Kitsap County Bar Association in 1978.

During his years in office, Bob has had the



*Retiring County Clerk Bob Freudenstein is seen in his office with three employees who have worked for him the longest: Pat Pedersen, Candy Bernet and Jan Williams.*

chance to meet many of the political leaders of our time, including John Kennedy, Hubert Humphrey, Scoop Jackson, Al Gore, Bill Clinton (when he was governor) and former Chief Justice Warren Berger when Bob graduated from the Institute for Court Management, held at the Supreme Court. His all-time hero, though, is "Maggie"—the late Sen. Warren Magnuson.

Among the people he has worked with here, he lists former County Commissioner Bill Mahan as his mentor, and says he also enjoyed working with Commissioners Lobe and Eder.

Among the accomplishments Bob is most proud of is the one trial/one day jury service he instituted, the first in the state and now a model. He also is proud of a bill he introduced with the Snohomish County Clerk to allow county clerks to draw interest on their trust funds.

After all his years of public service, it's about time Bob had some time to devote to himself, and we wish him well as he heads into retirement.

## Court clerks visit Chelan Co.

Members of the Clerk's Office took their annual "field trip" recently during the judges' judicial conference. Don Johnson, Karen Lawrence, Vicki Tabert, Teri Novorolsky, Gloria Masters and Cherie West visited Chelan County to view a new imaging system being used as a pilot project by the Chelan County Clerk's Office. It is designed to make the transition to a "paperless" office and "file free" court. Such a system is being studied for use here in the near future.

*"I'm opposed to his retirement and I have told him this many times. I'm going to miss him terribly."*

**Madelyn Bötta**  
Superior Court

*"If you needed to know anything that was going on in the Courthouse, Bob knew it."*

**Win Granlund**  
former County Commissioner

*He's been a good friend, a good supporter, and a heck of a worker for the courts. I'm going to miss him greatly when he heads into his big RV in the sky."*

**Judge Leonard Kruse**  
Superior Court

*"We kind of grew up in this job because I was the first employee he hired after his appointment. He's always been a good listener and he's very fair."*

**Susan Whitney,**  
Clerk's Office

*"We go back to high school. He's not only been a friend, but he's been an excellent clerk. We're going to miss him, there's no question about it."*

**Don Johnson**  
Clerk's Office

*"Intertwined with his great sense of humor and political savvy is a very down to earth dedication to serving the people of Kitsap County."*

**Karen Flynn**  
Auditor



# Retiring court clerk gets warm retirement send-off

■ *The retiring county official is feted by 400 well-wishers.*

By Julie McCormick  
Sun Staff



FREUDENSTEIN

On December 31, Bob Freudenstein will leave his corner office, emptied of the pictures of him with famous political figures and other memorabilia from 28½ years in office.

One of his 35 employees, if not Freudenstein himself, will hang a sign on his door that will say "Gone fishin'."

Sometime soon afterwards, he and wife Linda will climb into their motor home and head towards the sun.

Until then, the retiring Kitsap County Clerk of the Superior Court will just have to make the best of being a short-timer.

On Monday night, about 400 of his nearest and dearest friends and family started him on the countdown with a dinner and roast at President's Hall at the county fairgrounds.

For Freudenstein, who is the longest serving clerk among the 39 counties and reportedly the longest serving local elected official in the state, the nearest and dearest included three state

Supreme Court Justices, the full complement from Kitsap's bench, a healthy turnout of local state and county officials, plus the state auditor and treasurer.

Bob Freudenstein gets around. He's been a mover and shaker at the state and national level in professional organizations for nearly three decades.

Not only that, but every attorney in the county and plenty others who have cases in Kitsap depend upon his office, the records center for the superior court system, to run smoothly.

Freudenstein was lauded and kidded Monday, and noted by Presiding Judge Jay Roof as an innovator not afraid of new technology.

It was in that spirit that the Kitsap County Bar Association, which normally bestows clocks as retirement gifts, gave Freudenstein a portable fish finder.

Loyalty between Freudenstein and his staff is legend at the courthouse, and it was mostly staff who put the dinner together.

Susan Whitney, who started out with Freudenstein as a new employee the year he took office, remembered the early years, with only eight staffers and three judges.

Freudenstein was first appointed to fill the remaining term of another retiring clerk. "Bob and I started out together, we knew nothing about county government, about going to court and we learned together," said

Whitney.

Freudenstein's resignation the year before his office is up for election gives his recommended successor, court clerk supervisor Shirley Johnson, a boost among confederates to fill out the remainder of his term.

Others who have said they also want to be on the list of three recommended appointees presented to county commissioners by the Democratic Central Committee are Dean Logan, chief deputy to county Auditor Karen Flynn; David Schaaf, a retired Navy chief; and Leroy Williams, an audit manager for King County.

The Central Committee will meet in January to consider the candidates.

*Retain*

**Freudenstein**

**COUNTY CLERK**

**DEMOCRAT**