

His father, Eddie Fries, rowed and coached at West Side. His uncle Charlie also rowed, becoming a U.S. Champ and going to the 1936 Olympics in Berlin. Eventually, the water called out to Robert Fries as well, and Bob responded with enthusiasm.

"I started rowing in 1968 at the now defunct Niagara Frontier Rowing Club (NFRC), affectionately called Nif-Rick," Bob said. "It was located on the Erie Canal in Tonawanda, and I rowed with some O'Hara guys. I moved over to West Side in 1969 when NFRC shut down.

"I went to Sweet Home High School which didn't have a team, so I took up sculling. In 1971 I won the Champion single at the Canadian Secondary School Championships." Bob attended the University of Buffalo and rowed varsity crew, and during the summer months he rowed and sculled for West Side. He also served as West Side's treasurer while they were building their current boathouse after a fire destroyed the old Ferry Street boathouse.

Bob partnered with Mark Kostrzewski to row a double in 1984, and won the Master double at the Henley in 1989.

"I retired for the first time in 1991. Mark talked me out of retirement in 2011 to help get the BSRA going and to row a double again ... which we are still doing. I have been the BSRA treasurer since 2012."

Bob worked in the Finance Department at Univera Healthcare for 32 years. He lives in Clarence with his wife Kim and they have five grown children.