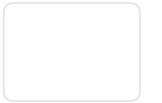


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Profiles

## From music to design, Bob Paltrow champions giving back

*Bellingham man wants to leave a positive impact on his community*

December 13, 2023 at 5:00 a.m.



Bob Paltrow sits beside the grand piano at the FireHouse Arts and Events Center. In addition to being an accomplished musician and songwriter, Paltrow is a graphic designer and budding author. If needed, he can also officiate your wedding. *(Finn Wendt/Cascadia Daily News)*

By **MARGARET BIKMAN**  
CDN Contributor



Musician and graphic designer Bob Paltrow said he’s “61 and having fun.”

Judging by what he describes as the projects of which he is most proud, that's an understatement.

"I give back with my talents," he said. "I believe in equal opportunities for all, and I want that equality for all people that are marginalized in our world. I've worked with many artists, writers, musicians, small businesses and individuals, and activists who want to make a positive impact on a world that needs as much help as we can give it."

Following is a smattering of what the Bellingham resident has accomplished in the last few decades:

He was on the design and production crew of the Northwest Herbal Fair in Deming, for 12 years.

He was co-host of the Martin Luther King Jr. Day Poetry Open Mic at the Community Food Co-op with local poet and author Kevin Murphy for nine years. He also designed all the posters for the event.

"MLK Jr. is emblematic and a hero to me, his life and purpose has largely guided my social activism in life," Paltrow said.

He donated graphic work to the campaign to save the Hundred Acre Wood near Fairhaven, which is now a protected area.

He produced a successful Kickstarter campaign and album with Bailey Ann Martinet to produce an album of original music, "Ruby Flambé."

In the 1990s, he helped produce two successful fundraisers and awareness campaigns for WomenCare Shelter of Bellingham.

Currently, he's working with musician Tracy Spring on a children's book based on her song "Love Doesn't Care Who You Love," and he's close to completing the illustrations for the book, which he said has been an intensive project.

He's also in the process of writing his own book, "The Last Forest," which he describes as "a futuristic science-fiction adventure."

"I'm a long way into it, and have a long way to go with it," Paltrow jokes.

He also has a side project, HempSquatch, with the goal of educating and promoting the myriad uses of hemp as a sustainable crop.

He's written more than 350 songs and has performed with bands such as Akaraka, Land of Mu, The Bailout, Patriots of Tomorrow, WuHu with Bekah Zachritz, Hathorakissa, and Your Highness. His current band, Cats Like Us, plays original music and covers.

### **Before Bellingham**

Paltrow was born in Miami Beach, Florida on March 14, 1962. His dad met his mother in Florida, where his father was a DJ at a popular radio station. She was a Dutch immigrant and concentration camp survivor, Paltrow said, who came to America alone at age 24.



Bob Paltrow plays the piano. Paltrow, 61, has written more than 350 songs. His current band, Cats Like Us, plays original music and covers. *(Finn Wendt/Cascadia Daily News)*

Paltrow inherited some of his parents' interests. His father had a degree in music education and was a singer and accordion player, and played clarinet in the U.S. Army marching band.

His mom was an illustrator of children's books who spoke seven languages and worked as an interpreter for the United Nations.

He grew up in Massapequa, New York, and Tucson, Arizona. Paltrow attended the University of Arizona starting as a music student, took a hiatus, then returned as a theology major, and then earned a bachelor of arts and sciences degree with an emphasis in graphic design illustration.

He spent a lot of time with his grandparents in New York.

"My grandfather's law office was above a newsstand that sold comic books," he says.

His grandfather would give him a dollar and he would go to the comic store and pick up as many 10- to 15-cent comics he could.

"I would read all the comic books in about 10 minutes," he said, "much to my grandparents' consternation."

Then his grandmother started supplying him with pens and crayons, watercolors and paper, to keep him busy.

"I began to copy and color the comic books I was reading — Spider-Man, The Silver Surfer and The Hulk," he said. "I would faithfully try to draw and re-create them with pencils and magic markers. And that was really how I began doing art."

As a multimedia artist he has cultivated creativity. For Paltrow, it involves graphic design, illustration, video-editing, creating music scores, arranging and producing music and video, marketing, branding, and managing social media accounts.

“I enjoy trying new things,” he said. “I’m not afraid to try and fail. The creative life is an interesting journey of self-discovery and self-acceptance.”

He's operated as Bob Paltrow Design since 1995 and has designed more than 300 album covers for independent musicians including Dean and Dudley Evenson, Dana Lyons, Havilah Rand, Robert Blake, The Naughty Blokes, Peter Ali, Anna Schadd, and Lydia McCauley.

About 10 years ago, a couple asked him to marry them, so he got a Universal Light Ministries certification online.

“I think I was good at helping them create a ceremony and vows that fit what they wanted to do,” he said.

They are the only couple he’s married, but since then, he’s been asked to give eulogies. He said it’s always an honor.

“I think I’m asked because I’m a good communicator by nature and by trade,” Paltrow said. “I try to listen and integrate what people are communicating to me. I keep it real and I see the preciousness and sacredness in what is here now, and who is missed.”

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