



Harry Leland Bjerkhoel

July 31, 1932 - May 9, 2018

Harry Leland Bjerkhoel passed away at home on May 9, 2018 at age 85, surrounded by loved ones. His passing followed a very unexpected diagnosis and short, yet valiant, battle with cancer. Harry and his wife, JoAnn, are longtime residents of Napa. In the early 70's, they enjoyed their summers at Markley Cove where they had a vacation trailer overlooking Lake Berryessa. In 1983, Harry and many family members built a home in Berryessa Highlands. Harry and JoAnn moved into that home permanently in 1989 after he retired as Superintendent of Construction for Peralta Development Company in the East Bay. Harry was a premier water skier into his 40's. During retirement, Harry and JoAnn loved to go boating and fishing on their patio boat during the week. They would often bring their favorite California wine and snacks to enjoy. The whole family enjoyed boating and water skiing on the Lake. Harry was active in the Napa Seniors Bowling League for 29 years and developed many wonderful friendships.

Harry was born in Roseau, Minnesota on July 31, 1932. As a young boy, family members affectionately called him "Buddy." He married Ruby Nesteby in 1950 and had three children with her. To support his young family, he worked for a time in Alaska as a bowl cook and started a laundry business on the side. When he decided to return to Minnesota, his boss was really disappointed he was leaving but Harry had to get back to his family. Eventually, Harry tired of the cold, harsh winters in Northern Minnesota. Around 1960, he decided to pick up roots and relocate his family to San Jose, California where he started working as an apprentice in the construction industry. He quickly advanced to foreman and was given key leadership roles due to his ability to get things done and his hard work ethic which is a trait he had all his life. In 1964, the family moved to Fremont, California. In 1969, Ruby passed away from lung cancer, leaving him to care for their three children on his own. In 1971 he met, and in 1972, married the wonderful love of his life - JoAnn.

Harry is survived by his wife of 46 years, JoAnn Estelle Estensen Bjerkhoel, his son Leland Bjerkhoel and his wife, Susan, his step-daughter Sheryl Hawes and step-son Steven Hawes and fiancée, Barbara Linville. Harry had already lost a son, Wayne Bjerkhoel, and a daughter Myrna Pockels, who were very loved and are very much

missed. Harry is survived by his loving grandchildren and their spouses, Christine & Vince Kramer, Alissa Bjerkhoel & Steven Foley, Dayna & Keith Neal, Jamie Bjerkhoel & Brendan McVey and Brandon Bjerkhoel; his great-grandchildren, Doug, Karena, and Kaitlyne Bjerkhoel, Bronson Turner, Kaylee and Savannah Kramer, and Everly Foley. He is also survived by his brothers, sisters, and in-laws: Dennis & Donnette Bjerkhoel, Warren & Bonnie Bjerkhoel, Kenney Bjerkhoel, Barbara & Elroy Bentz, Waunda Bravard, Marilyn Wall and Sue & Bill Laurie, as well as many cherished nieces, nephews and cousins.

Harry was very proud of his Norwegian heritage. He earned Life Member status in 1997, and recently celebrated 50 years of very active membership with the Sons of Norway Nordahl Grieg Lodge in Los Gatos, California. He was President of the lodge in 1980. For the last 20 years, he was Co-chairman of the annual Lutefisk Dinner lodge fundraiser where he could be found in the outdoor kitchen cooking 900 pounds of fresh lutefisk amongst many other tasks! He has many, many close friends there. Harry also served as President of the Rec Board for Camp Norge in Alta, California for 8 years. During that period, he was instrumental in building a new state of the art recreation hall called Heritage Hall.

Harry knew how to have a good time. He was the life of the party and the backbone of the family. His great sense of humor while reminiscing about the past often led to the type of laughing that leaves tears in your eyes. A hallmark of family gatherings and even weddings was Harry leading everyone in a Norwegian Skol. The energy he had, even into his 80s, was unparalleled. Many of his neighbors, friends and family would visit with Harry as he worked on his home projects such as building a putting green, horseshoe pit, numerous workshops, a 100' retaining wall, fences, wine cork trivets, the list goes on!

Harry was also much loved for his musical talents. Despite the fact that he couldn't really read music, he learned to play the accordion very well by ear. Over the years, his family and friends have thoroughly enjoyed countless hours of his music. Many family members also cherish all the times they got to play their various instruments right alongside Harry. Many would agree that some of their best memories of Harry are inseparably connected to hearing him play accordion at various Sons of Norway social events and family gatherings.

Harry was very generous and shared his good fortune with family many, many times. He invited all the extended family on a Caribbean Cruise to Puerto Rico, Aruba, St. Thomas and Caracas, Venezuela! It was the best vacation with fun memories, laughter and new experiences. Harry and JoAnn loved to travel; they went to China, Costa Rica, Alaska, Mexico, Hawaii, England, Puerto Rico, Venezuela, France and Norway. They crossed the

country many times in their RV in the Fall to enjoy Hostfest festivities and the gorgeous Fall colors in the Northeast. They used their RV for the annual excursions to Camp Norge in Alta where the Bjerkhoel clan grew to over 50 people! Harry was much loved by all and will be tremendously missed!

There will be a Celebration of Harry's Life on July 29 at Nordahl Grieg Hall in Los Gatos.

In lieu of flowers, any donations can be made to Camp Norge in Alta, CA., Love Your Lodge Fund-Nordahl Greig Hall, Los Gatos, CA., the Sons of Norway Foundation, Minneapolis, MN., or any Hospice Organization.

Events

MAY **Memorial Service** 11:00AM

25

Fremont Chapel of the Roses

1940 Peralta Boulevard, Fremont, CA, US, 94536

Comments



“ 2 files added to the tribute wall



Larry Hulberg - May 24, 2018 at 12:56 PM



“ Harry Bjerkhoel will be greatly missed by everyone at Nordahl Grieg Lodge. He was a mainstay of the lodge, accomplishing many projects over the years and, with his wife JoAnn, co-managing our annual lutefisk and meatball dinner. He knew where everything was, how things went together and what needed to be done to make the event come off without a hitch. Year after year, he provided organization, management, carpentry and plumbing skills, cooking expertise, security and entertainment. He knew how to cook the lutefisk to keep our customers coming back for more. He devised creative solutions to many problems like dealing with inclement weather or fish that arrived water logged. With his son Leland, Harry played until late at night, then locked the building up and still was up early the next morning to pack things up for next year.

He was a hard worker and man of many talents who always seemed to have a twinkle in his eye. He often had an impish grin that made you think he was up to something but, usually, he just took joy in life's many small accomplishments. He was a tireless worker, never complaining, but always looking forward to relaxing and visiting with friends. He worked hard but was always ready for a party and wanted everyone to have a good time. We will miss his humor and infectious smile but will always be thankful for the time we had together.

Larry & Marcia Hulberg



Larry Hulberg - May 24, 2018 at 12:50 PM