



Harold Haakon Tollefson Sr.

March 26, 1922 - December 10, 2014

We are much saddened by the passing of our father Harold Haakon Tollefson, Sr., on Wednesday, December 10. He was 92 years of age. He was the youngest child of immigrant Norwegian parents and was born and raised in Montana on a farm. He nearly died from pneumonia when he was in his teens, but the prayers of his mother and the timely arrival of penicillin gave him a reprieve of some three quarters of a century longer to live, for which we are very thankful.

When he read a magazine article about the German invasion of Poland, he decided to volunteer for military service in WWII, though still very thin from the effect of the pneumonia and being underage for military service at the time. He needed parental consent to enlist. He served in the last days of the army horse cavalry. He was promoted to corporal when an officer observed him riding a horse that was considered to be too wild for anyone to ride. After the cavalry was disbanded, he was transferred into the artillery arm of the army. Among other places, he served in Monterey and Santa Barbara, where he met his future wife Betty Castro, as well as serving in Puerto Rico. In the latter place, he participated in the shelling of German submarines. He also served as an MP in San Juan, breaking up fights in the bars between men of the different armed services. He himself boxed in the army and had success because he fought in a lower weight division and had a reach advantage over his opponents at six feet tall. As he told it, however, he met his match when he fought a smaller bull of a man who took his best punches and flattened him in the fight.

Our father attended and graduated from Woodbury College (now University) in LA after the war. He was the valedictorian for his graduating class. He then returned to Santa Barbara, where he held many jobs in the next few years, and we enjoyed the stories that he told about them. For instance, he had a shortlived job working in the old Wonder Bread factory, in which he had an experience similar to Lucy in the chocolate factory episode. He also worked on Stearns Wharf putting gas in the boats for, among others, the actor James Cagney. Our father is mentioned in a book by the late local historian Walker Tompkins about the wharf.

He then went to work with Farmers' Insurance Company, first as an adjustor and then as a

supervisor until his retirement. He gained a reputation for his prodigious ability to settle many cases and at one time worked a large area from Paso Robles down to the edge of LA if my memory serves me. He became famous at Farmers' Insurance Company and would be introduced at their gatherings as the agent who settled their insurance case for the automobile accident death of the actor James Dean in 1955.

He loved to walk and to enjoy the outdoors until near the end. Among other adventures, he hiked up to the Continental Divide in Glacier National Park in Montana, did river rafting on the rapids of the Mackenzie River in Canada, and traveled to the Yukon and up into the Arctic Circle.

He lived a full life. He was a great father and friend. He epitomized the greatest generation's emphasis on love and duty for family and country. We will miss him dearly, but he left us many fond and loving memories. He is survived by his daughter Margaret, his son Harold, Jr., his stepdaughter Martha, and his stepdaughter Louise. He is to be honored in a private ceremony held at Welch-Ryce-Haider Funeral Chapel and Crematorium.

Comments



“ My uncle was like a second father to me after my dad, Carlos Castro, died in 1959. When

I had an accident while play as a young child, it was uncle Harold who saw my mother Flora got to the emergency room, as our family didn't own a car. I remember he would say "Don't be afraid of a tiger, just reach in and pull him inside out!, :) and we laughed. He was a fine husband, father, uncle, and friend. The last time I saw him was on one of his walks, and he commented on how time had flown. I will always remember him for his generosity, kindness, and good example. My condolences to cousins, Margaret, Harold Jr., Louise and Martha. I will miss, but remember him often.



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