



Garlan Luther Wetzel

April 23, 1922 - April 11, 2019

It is with great sorrow that the Wetzel family shares the loss of the passing of Garlan Luther Wetzel. He passed away on April 11, 2019 just days before his 97th birthday at his home in Costa Mesa, California with his wife, Edyth Misar Wetzel and other Wetzel family by his side.

Garlan was the youngest son of Grace Newport and George Luther Wetzel of Cedar Rapids, Iowa and later of San Clemente, California.

Garlan became ill and was checked into Hoag Hospital. He was diagnosed with a minor ailment that required basic surgery, but tragically, he developed serious complications, as was the fate of his brother, just days before his own 97th birthday. Garlan was then brought home to continue his recovery, but unfortunately, he passed away instead. He is survived by his wife Edyth, his sister-in-law Ruth Wetzel of Laguna Beach and his brother's children, Garlan's nieces and nephews; niece Gretch Saaduddin of Reseda, California; nephew David Wetzel of Laguna Beach, California, his son Erik, wife Bonnie and grand-daughter Gracie; niece Kristin Meyer of Waianae, Hawaii, her son Jason Meyer, wife Arnittv, son Jacob; her son Aaron Meyer; her son Joshua Meyer, wife Bobby Joh, and daughter Makenna. He also leaves behind a large family on Eydth's side, from Texas, Illinois, South Carolina, and Florida.

He loved this large family and every summer, he and Edyth and their beloved Shelties would drive from California back to Michigan, Cedar Rapids, Florida and parts unknown to visit family and friends and the good old USA, during their summer vacations.

As a boy, Garlan was a very adventurous and daring young man. His gusto for life was demonstrated in everything he did, from his daredevil bike antics to his constant enticing and identifiable whistling. As a young man, Edyth remembers her mother telling her about watching Garlan being chased down the road on his bike with his mother Grace close behind, swatting at him with a broom in frustration that he had not gone to the baker's soon enough to get the day old bread before it was sold out. "Mama said that that was when she knew that Garlan was the man for Edyth". Garlan and Grant's mother was a wonderful woman who was adamant about watching after her boys and making sure they

were good men and "great husband material".

Garlan enjoyed taking on those challenges of daily life, not sports but basic challenges, like

riding his bike over a suspended railroad with no bridge beneath, except the view of the long drop down below to the river. He always kept his parents on their toes. He and his brother, Grant, were two unique and great young men that kept everyone entertained and awestruck at all times. The two had their ongoing rivalry between Garlan's "General Motors" Chevys and his brother's "Fixed or repaired Daily" Fords. It continued until the early 2000's when the Fords won out as Garlan bought his pride and joys, Crown Victoria, and his leather upholstered F-150 truck.

Garlan graduated from McKinley High School in Cedar Rapids, Iowa and was inducted into the service as a member of the National Guard, leaving Cedar Rapids February 23, 1941 for initial training at Camp Claiborne, Louisiana. He was inducted into the U.S. Army and went to Special Surgical Training at Ft. Sam Houston. He went on to Ireland for 6 months and then on to Scotland for another 2 1/2 more months of additional special training. On November 8, 1942, Private Garlan Wetzel then began his true calling and served in 5 major battles in North Africa; then Tunisia; Campay; Fondouk; Faid Pass; Hill 609; Kaurouan and the battle for Kasserine Pass where he lost everything on his back when his unit was surrounded and escaped by 20 minutes. He left North Africa in September 1943. Garlan then took part in the "first act" of the army's invasion of Italy, under Lt. General Mark Clark. When asked about the extreme nature of his MOS, all he humbly responded, was "This is just one of our jobs".

Garlan and his team worked mostly at night, carrying stretchers and heavy loads over and

under heavy fire, sometimes traveling two complete days without sleep and having covered as much as 125 miles. They were the medical soldiers carrying the wounded back to hospitals in from the field of battle. It can take as much as 3 hours to get a wounded man off the battlefield. Through his harrowing experiences, Private Garlan L. Wetzel was awarded the Silver Star: "While marking out a shorter route of evacuation for the litter casualties, Private Wetzel remained cool and returned under fire and continued through the night guiding the litter bearers to the collection station. Private Wetzel's coolness and courage were exemplary in the face of grave danger."

Upon returning home, on leave, he married his long time love, Edyth Misar from Chicago, Illinois, in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. They married on Easter Sunday/April Fools day 1945. At the end of his enlistment, under the G.I. Bill, Garlan went on to Michigan State and received his degree in Journalism. He then earned his Master's Degree in Education at Chapman College while working for the Daily Pilot, after he and Edyth moved to Southern California, where Garlan's parents resided. He then went on to teach 5th and 6th grade with a few years as Principle at Bay View, in the Newport Mesa School District, until it

closed. His students were known as "Wetzel's Pretzels" before there was even a fast food chain with that name. Garlan retired after 35 years, as did Edyth, after 25 years of teaching 2nd and 3rd graders.

Their students loved them and Garlan enjoyed many of his students continuing to visit him at their home in Costa Mesa up until he went into the hospital. For years, his students came from all over the U.S., and even Mexico to see him. He enjoyed his 85th birthday with a surprise celebration, complete with a full sized school bus, loaded with all his now adult students from a variety of years past and a large supply of "Wetzel's Pretzel's", this time, ones you can eat. Garlan was loved by all. His class room was as eclectic as was his home workshop and the treasures he recovered on his bike rides while looking for misc. parts for his bikes he would repair, rebuild and then give away to the church, adults or kids that needed them. Add to that his woodworking creations from his youth to his windmill and clay projects that still adorn their home today. He was an artist in a variety of ways and with his love for aviation, his class room contained as many military and commercial planes as it could possibly hold. Then there were his special classes for learning through airplane model assembly. His love of horticulture; from grafting, to salvaging dying plants, to the beauty of his roses, his fruit trees, his bird houses, ponds and yard decor. He was an artist in every way, even the way he rode his bike and whistled, until his very early 90's when Edyth had to remind him he was no longer a kid any more and the bike was stored, but the repairs continued.

These were the things that made the anticipation and excitement of he and Edyth's upcoming summer visits such a great event for the whole family. All the nieces and nephews got to enjoy this eclectic and free spirited man who gave so much to everyone in so many ways. Tent and trailer camping; motor boats named Go, Mo Go, Still Mo Go, and No Mo Doe; sightseeing; waterskiing in the Newport Harbor; adventures to Catalina and watching fish, dolphins and whales in between. And of course Sunday afternoon bike rides with Uncle Garlan and his wide selection of bikes for everyone to choose from. Edyth says that his mother, Grace, was the reason he was such a wonderful and interesting man and husband and was a wonderful mother-in-law as well. As for Edyth herself, she will continually tell you, "He is a prize of the first magnitude!!!" And she is completely correct. There was no one like Garlan Luther Wetzel, the best Uncle, teacher, and one of the best men there could ever be. He was amazing!

Comments



“ Hey Mr. Wetzel I can't believe you are gone. You taught me so much about what it means to be a good citizen and a student of history. (I can still see your model WWII war planes hanging from the ceiling of your 8th grade history class.) I thought of you a lot during the recent TV coverage of the 75th anniversary of D Day. Your lessons will live on forever in my memory. (That makes you a pretty darn good teacher in my book.) Thank you for caring enough to push me to always ask why and always want to learn more. You made a big difference in my life. I hope your final flight was a good one.

Steve Pearson

Steve Pearson - June 10, 2019 at 07:38 PM