



Robert Russell Welp

February 16, 1919 - December 11, 2019

Robert “Bob” Russell Welp, was born Feb. 16, 1919, and passed from this life to the next on Dec. 11, 2019.

Beloved father of Cheri (Greg) Boon in Eagan, Minnesota; Margie (Joe) Cahill in Nevada, Iowa; Jenny Welp in Rochester, Minnesota; Chris DiNunzio in Naples, Florida; Marty (Al Belfield) Wolins in San Antonio, Texas; and Michael Welp in Sandpoint, Idaho.

He will live on in the hearts of his grandchildren Peter Boon; Christy (Andrey Tomashevskiy) Cahill; Mackenzie (Jordan Wehner) Cahill; Caitlin Boon; Andy DiNunzio; Nick Boon; Ben Wolins; Lydia Welp; and Nina Welp; and his new great granddaughter Nina Eloise Tomashevskiy.

He was preceded in death by his parents Walter and Mabel (Saunders) Welp; wife Patricia; brother Ambrose Welp; sister-in-law Lorraine Welp; sister Margery McCarten; and brother-in-law William “Bill” McCarten.

Growing up in Humboldt, Iowa, Bob’s last high school job was lighting the heater for the catholic school, one mile from home. He walked to school and back before breakfast, then back to attend school. The winter of 1936 is known as the most severe winter on record, with serial blizzards and temperatures reaching 20 degrees below zero. He earned \$25 per month.

After playing football in Junior College, he bought football tickets during his first year at the University of Iowa. Bob and his friends attended every home game; they were thrilled with this wondrous new quarterback, Nile Kinnick. Bob was inducted into Pi Tau Sigma, the honorary Mechanical Engineering fraternity. He graduated in 1941, a master of the slide rule.

Bob joined the Navy in August of 1943. He was a Lt jg in Air Group 53 on the USS Saratoga (CV3) aircraft carrier, and served as the maintenance officer for the night security TBM squadron (torpedo bombers). Bob was on the “Sara” at Iwo Jima in 1945, when a three minute kamikaze attack damaged the carrier beyond repair, counting 62 killed, 192 wounded, and 61 missing.

After the war ended, with a few months left to serve his three years, Bob was assigned to Pensacola. There he met Patricia Brown, who captured his heart. On their first date, he let her choose how to spend the few coins in his pocket—he could buy her flowers or take the bus to get back to the base. It was a long walk back, but the romance was kindled.

After buying his first car (a 10+ year old Packard coupe) and getting married, Bob moved Pat to Fort Dodge, Iowa—a place she had only visited in the summertime. They soon started their family. Bob had joined Walter, Ambrose, and Bill in the family business, which was a limestone mine that Walter had started 16 years earlier. Bob’s slide rule skills took them to the choice limestone and an upgrade from a shaft entrance to a drive-in entrance. Retiring in 1980, he and Pat relocated to the warmth of Naples, Florida.

In a recent gathering of four generations, he was thrilled to meet and hold baby Nina in his lap. For all of the kids, Bob was a constant source of warmth, patience, and even-temperedness. We all treasure memories from three decades of annual family reunions, which Bob instigated and orchestrated.

Bob was a numbers man. Not in gambling, but in recording statistics: grandchildren heights; rainfall; blood pressure (which spiked after his afternoon Mt. Dew); limestone tonnage; and his daily crossword scores. His favorite numbers were 6 children; 9 grandchildren; 1 great grandchild; 6 holes-in-one; one 39 inch snook (his favorite fish); 172 cut-off milk cartons of rocks from around the world, which he cut and polished; and 1,694 pieces of faceted-stone jewelry that he hand-made.

After years of golf, bocce ball, and cleaning up highway litter, he made new friends through ice cream socials. He never out-grew the joy of a good joke or a good prank. His first hospitalization and physical therapy was at the age of 99, and this led to making friends with the perpetually cheerful staff at the Vi Bentley Care Center. Bob's family is forever grateful to all staff for their help in his recovery, and for their kindness and companionship in giving him something else he treasured in life—a beautiful sunset.

In lieu of flowers or donations, we invite you to make someone's day with a joke, a wink, or a smile. Offering unexpected, uplifting humor was the foundation for Bob's interactions with people, and spreading this delight to others would be the most welcomed honoring possible. Messages of condolence may be sent to Chris DiNunzio, 5795 Cove Circle, Naples, FL 34119.

Tribute Wall



“ *Robert Russell Welp*

October 09, 2023 at 03:40 AM