

## Obituary for Robert Wikstrom



8/3/1931 - 10/13/2015

Robert "crossed over the bar" Oct. 13, 2015 at Tacoma Lutheran Retirement Community nursing care center. He was an only child, born to N.O. Wikstrom and Ruth H. Johnson in Grand Rapids, Michigan on August 3, 1931. Bob attended Grand Rapids J.C. and Albion College in Albion, Michigan, where he excelled in football and was awarded All MIAA player of the year, as well as being inducted into their Athletic Hall of Fame. He went on to Univ. of IL for his M.S. degree. During these years he was an active member of the Naval Reserve, and when he graduated was accepted at Officer Candidate School and then to Naval Aviation Training. After a tour of duty in Japan he was stationed at Whidbey Island NAS to finish out his active duty career. He remained in the reserve for his full 20 years, and retired a LCDR. During his final months on Whidbey Island he often visited the athletic department at the Univ. of Washington, and became well-acquainted with the staff, who offered him a position teaching swimming in their facility. As luck would have it, one of his peers invited him to dinner to meet his sister, Shari. Four months later they were married, and the rest is fifty-six years of beautiful history, including three wonderful children, Michael, Suzanne, and Sarah, and six grandchildren, Taylor, Derek, James, Randy, Trevor, and Sophia. Following their marriage in Seattle the couple moved to Grand Rapids, where Bob taught and coached at J.C. before moving on back to Albion, his alma mater, where he became a physical educator and coached football, tennis, and swimming. After twelve years Bob moved his family back to Tacoma to be closer to Shari's family. He initiated the new swimming facility at Pierce College in 1973, and taught and coached swimming and tennis until 1986. During this time he and Shari became avid joggers, entering and placing in many races around the area, including several marathons. Bob was a member of various organizations: Military Officers Association, Navy League, American Legion, Washington Athletic Club, Elks, Masons, and American Cribbage Congress, in which he was a judge and served on the BOD. Raised as a Methodist, his father gave him an appreciation for the history and music of the church. He enjoyed reading the Bible and studying other religions. Although his attendance at church was limited the last few years of his life, a Sunday morning seldom went by without listening to or watching the Mormon Tabernacle Choir on radio or TV. He had a full career as a teacher, coach and mentor, so following a bad accident when hit by a car while out jogging with Shari, he resigned his position at Pierce and started building houses with a friend who was a licensed contractor. Bob became a 'go-fer,' as he called himself. He'd 'go' for whatever was needed, and pounded nails wherever he was told. He loved working in the outdoors, rain or shine, and when one house got sold they started on another one. When Bob finally decided to retire, he and Shari took up cribbage seriously, and became familiar faces around the West Coast and beyond at

weekend tournaments. Bob was preceded in death by his youngest daughter, Sarah, and his ashes will commingle with hers at various places of significance. Memorials in his name may be received at Tacoma Lutheran Retirement Community Foundation, 1301 Highland Parkway, Tacoma, 98406.

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