



Harold F. "Harry" Wassmann

January 12, 1919 - August 30, 2017

Harold (Harry) Wassmann passed away peacefully on August 30, 2017 with family and friends by his side. A true Benician, Harry was born in the family home that his grandfather had built in 1899 and spent his whole life there. He was also a lifelong member of St. Dominic's Parish.

Harry was a civil service employee working at Travis Air Force Base for most of his career. He retired after over 40 years of service and began his second career preserving the history of Benicia. A founding member of both the Benicia Historical Society and the Benicia Historical Museum, he served as president of both organizations. Harry was also responsible for promoting the Memorial Day service at the Benicia Arsenal Post Cemetery. He was proud of his town and its place in California history, and he was generous in sharing his knowledge with others.

Harry's other passion was his family: His devoted wife Diane, his son Greg Wassmann (David Gray) of San Jose, his daughter Catherine Joyner (Scott), and his beloved granddaughter Hannah Dreesbach, all of Helena, Montana. Harry was a loving husband, father, and grandfather – a kind and giving soul. His behavior exemplified the definition of a gentleman: he was a gentle man. He had an incredible gift for making people feel loved – even strangers. He particularly cherished his granddaughter, Hannah, who called him "Grandpa Daddy." He blessed our lives with his presence and will be sorely missed by many.

Harry had a sense of humor, even in his final weeks, which would make anyone smile. During every hospital stay, the hospital staff loved him because he was so entertaining. He was also a great story-teller. He gave us the gifts of laughter, love, gratitude, kindness, an appreciation of history and an example of strong faith in God. Shortly before he passed, with his entire family gathered around him, he expressed his love for his family, and his gratitude to God for all the blessings in his life. In all honesty, he was the one who was the blessing. The world is a better place, having been graced with his presence for nearly 99 years. He had a long life filled with love, and is finally at rest with the Lord.

The following is a letter written by Hannah to her beloved grandfather:

Grandpa,

When you went, I imagine you went a butterfly – wings bathed in sunlight and half-

remembered smiles. I imagine you left your body, a broken vessel collecting tears, and floated away... Gently rising upon God's breath.

Basking in the golden sun.

And here, I think you paused to look back at those below. An acrobat balancing on a tight rope to heaven, on one side, your first life, and on the other, the next.

Perhaps, in that moment, you still felt the soft leather grip of a warm hand in yours.

Perhaps you heard the echo of voices. The voices of loved ones. The voices of memories.

The good times, the bad.

Perhaps you watched us - in our hope, in our grief - and smiled; a tired smile, full of things left unsaid. Full of hopes that the withered shell you left behind will not be how we

remember you. Hopes that we will instead remember the brilliant colors of a beautiful life.

But I think these things did not burden your heart as you stepped across the threshold of

Heaven, for beyond that threshold, I know you found warm light and gentle love. Love

from our hearts. Love from those waiting for you with open arms.

I hear the voices of memories now. Gentle voices. Quiet.

"Mail! Mail!"

"Welcome to the Suzie Q Café."

"Go fish!"

"Go to the bakery in town..."

"Want a hot dog?"

"The members of the Treble Club say hello."

"Beautiful glasswork..."

"Where's Pinocchio's nose?"

"Now this used to belong to..."

"I love you."

You once passed me a note from the front seat, playing that game of ours. Mail!

It read, "Hannah, I can hug tighter than you."

I responded in blocky letters "no I can!!!"

That makes me smile now.

So thank you, Grandpa. My Grandpa Daddy. Thank you for everything you gave me. The love, the laughter, the wonder.

I love you.

Now and forever.

Yours truly,

Hannah

A vigil will be held at 7:00 PM on Friday, September 29, 2017 at Passalacqua Funeral Chapel. A funeral mass will be held at St. Dominic's Church at 12 noon on Saturday, September 30, 2017, to be followed by internment at St. Dominic's Cemetery.

Comments



“ Dear Mrs. Wassmann, We were very sorry to hear about the death of your husband. He was a pillar of our community and a lovely gentleman! I've enjoyed looking at the photos posted on this website; clearly he led a happy life surrounded by his loving family. We know his passing will leave a huge hole. You have our very deepest sympathy. --Kathryn Reiss, Tom Strychacz , Isabel --and the whole family.

Kathryn Reiss - January 27, 2018 at 02:31 AM



“ Sweet Remembrance Spray was purchased for the family of Harold F. "Harry" Wassmann.



September 29, 2017 at 02:10 PM



“ 3 files added to the album LifeTributes



Passalacqua Funeral Chapel - September 28, 2017 at 11:32 AM



“ Gary and Jackie French purchased the Arrive in Style for the family of Harold F. "Harry" Wassmann.



Gary and Jackie French - September 27, 2017 at 09:06 PM



“ I used to act as a docent at St. Paul's Episcopal Church years ago, when Harry would bring tour groups through. He was always such a gentleman, so attentive, respectful and positive. I always enjoyed acting as docent when he was bringing in a group. He was a very fine gentleman, and will be greatly missed.

Jackie French - September 27, 2017 at 09:00 PM



“ 153 files added to the album LifeTributes



Passalacqua Funeral Chapel - September 27, 2017 at 06:06 PM



“ What a gift Mr.Wassman was to all of the people in Benicia. His knowledge of history was astounding, and he was always such a gentleman. It was an honor to know him. He will be missed, condolences to Dianne and family.



Ann and Ron Pearman - September 25, 2017 at 05:59 PM



“ It has taken me awhile to think of how to talk about Harry Wassmann. I met Harry in 1985 when I visited the Camel Barn Museum two weeks after I moved here. He sparked my interest in the history of Benicia. It was obvious that Harry was a true gentleman. I saw him again at the Benicia State Capitol where he was a docent. He sparked my interest in California history. Not long after, I visited the Dial's Antique Shop and Harry was there! I got the idea that Harry loved this town and that he was everywhere!. I joined the board of the museum in 1990 and there was Harry. Ever since that day, Harry has been a part of my life. I called him for answers to questions about Benicia history every week. When visiting him and his wife Diane, I always went away knowing more than when I arrived. Harry, I will miss our phone calls and our visits at your home. As I continue to work at the museum, I do it because of your dedication to this museum and Benicia history.

Beverly Phelan
Museum Curator



Beverly Phelan - September 19, 2017 at 03:49 PM



“ Harry was a wonderfully gracious gentleman who I will miss greatly. My thoughts and prayers go to Diane and his family.

With Sympathy,
Jeff Graves

jeffery graves - September 15, 2017 at 04:39 PM



“ Words cannot express the loss we feel at Harry's passing. We are happy for him that he has gone to live in a better place - but we shall miss him dearly in the everyday life of our town. Such a true treasure in every sense of the word. He could bring history alive in the telling, and all the details were important, no matter how small. I shall cherish the memories I have of his knowledge of St. Dominic's Cemetery and of the City Cemetery and all those wonderful characters whom we all knew and loved as part of the heartbeat of Benicia. Rest in peace. You were a marvelous man! My sympathy to all his family and friends, Marie Earp

MARIE EARP - September 12, 2017 at 04:17 PM



“ Harry's passing is the end of an era. His love for Benicia and his knowledge of its history were unsurpassed and he shared both with all who asked. I personally will miss the stories of the small events and people in Benicia's past that Harry shared; making history more than just dates and facts. On a personal level I will miss his quirky, "dry" sense of humor which so quietly found its way into our conversations. Not one to demand the spotlight, his soft spoken, knowledgeable voice, seemed to make people listen to what he had to say. Harry, I'll miss our pouring over old photos and your comments which gave them a life I would never have known without you.

Bob Kvasnicka

