



Don Olson

March 6, 1930 - July 22, 2017

Long-time Benician Don Olson, 87, passed away Saturday at his home, surrounded by his family. Don made his home and raised his family in Benicia for seventy years after first graduating from Vallejo High School in 1948, where he racked up numerous athletic accolades.

He was born Edward Donald Olson in Hayti, South Dakota and moved with his parents to Vallejo at the age of twelve. He missed most of his seventh-grade year at Franklin Junior High, opting instead to sell newspapers on a corner of Georgia Street by shouting out the latest World War II headlines. These were the first indications of a legendary work ethic for which he would become well known. When the school notified his mother of his truancy, he successfully completed testing enabling him to slip through to the eighth grade anyway!

In the late 40s, Don began his career with a job at Bank of America. In 1950, he married Shirley Smith, his sweetheart from the tenth grade and love of his life. (She always considered herself fortunate that she snagged the hall of fame quarterback and cutest boy in school!) They welcomed son Rick in 1951 and daughter Lynn in 1952. He honed his entrepreneurial abilities through managing positions at Mac's Liquor Store and again at Mac-Ol Laundromat, which he co-started. Next came added careers in the mortgage business and insurance, but he found his true calling in real estate, starting Olson Realty in the early 60s. Thus began a decades-long commitment to old-fashioned customer service (the joke was he'd sold every house in Benicia - twice.)

Even a brief retirement didn't take, and he continued in his capacity as a top area Realtor until his passing. Several of his grandchildren ended up following him into this vocation.

Don was a beloved fixture in the Benicia community, immersing himself into the local business scene. He was a former member of numerous local organizations including the Grand Jury and the Sons of Norway, and he served in leadership positions for the Benicia Planning Commission, Recreation Committee, Heritage Presbyterian Church, and Benicia Rotary Club. He enjoyed hunting and fishing and was a former member of both the Green Lodge Duck Club and Ducks Unlimited. He was a devoted fan of Benicia High School sports and proudly watched his son coach varsity basketball for many years. And while he closely followed the San Francisco Giants and Golden State Warriors, he was a 50+ year "49er Faithful," even traveling to see his 49ers win the '82 Super Bowl in Detroit.

Later years included much travel (including a favorite trip to visit cousins in Norway), hobbies of woodworking and carpentry, and the joy of being a grandparent. He made friendships that spanned the years, many dating back to junior high and high school. Don cherished his life in Benicia and put people above all else; his relationships reached across several generations. His generosity extended to everyone, whether it was his dearest friend or someone he barely knew.

Don loved a good story. And he was blessed with an endearing sense of humor, a sharp mind and an unfailing memory, so his stories were worth listening to! These traits never faltered. From Norwegian farm boy to adored and admired patriarch, Don was a man who faced the world with an ever-positive perspective, folksy wisdom, and twinkle in his eye.

Don will be missed and remembered dearly by all who knew him. He is survived by Shirley, his wife of nearly 68 years; his children Rick (Marilynne) Olson and Lynn (Gary) Pettigrew; grandchildren Marisa (Drew) Coleman, Summer (Bryan) Stubblefield, Jillian Merritt, and Hayley (Michael) Bauder; and several great grandchildren.

The family wishes to thank Hospice of the East Bay – especially case manager Deborah Lee – and LivHOME for assisting with care.

Visitation will be 3-7 pm Thursday at Passalacqua Funeral Chapel. Funeral services will be held 11 am Friday at Heritage Presbyterian Church, 1400 East Second Street, Benicia. Burial will be private.

Cemetery Details

Private

Tribute Wall



“ *Don Olson*

November 29, 2022 at 08:20 PM



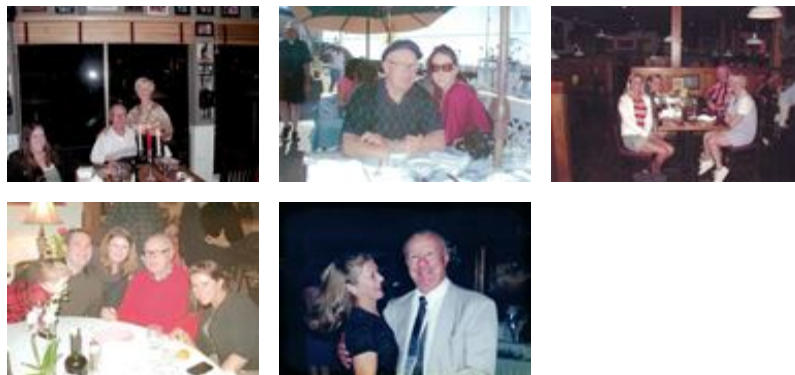
“ *7 files added to the album LifeTributes*



Passalacqua Funeral Chapel - July 25, 2017 at 03:52 PM



“ *109 files added to the album LifeTributes*



Passalacqua Funeral Chapel - July 25, 2017 at 11:05 AM

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“ *David Batchelor lit a candle in memory of Don Olson*



David Batchelor - July 23, 2017 at 04:11 PM