



Howard Otto Wessbecher

October 7, 1925 - April 8, 2017

Howard Otto Wessbecher, 91, died Saturday, April 8 in Corvallis, Oregon. Howard was born October 7, 1925 in the Brooklyn borough of New York City, the son of Ludwig and Karolina Gierend Wessbecher.

Howard was called to duty in 1944 and served in the military police in the war in the Pacific. After his service he used his GI Bill to attend Montana State University to obtain his degree in Forestry. Upon his graduation he found there were no available jobs at that time, so he went to work for the US Weather Bureau Arctic Operations. This led him to work at both the North and South Poles. He was among the first group of scientists who "wintered over" at the South Pole. Howard's job was to coordinate with the military to set up the research projects for International Geophysical Year at the soon to be opened South Pole Base (first landing there was October 31, 1956). He worked with the military to ensure that everything that was needed for Aurora, Geomagnetism, Seismology, Ionospheric, Meteorology, Geomorphology and Glaciological research was packaged and readied for air drop when South Pole Base opened. Howard also painted the first south pole "pole" and also was honored with Wessbecher Glacier, named after him to mark his scientific assistance in the establishment of the South Pole station.

Returning to the Pacific NW, he got a job in Forestry as a silviculturist and became an expert in reforestation for the National Forest Service, married Dian and raised three daughters. Their life was filled with activities such as skiing and sailing. His second marriage was to Sondra, a life partner for 42 years. Through her he gained another family via her extended family of nieces and her stepdaughter. Early in their marriage they traveled to Germany and Austria and after retirement they did an extended trip around the United States in their camper and another time they drove the Al-Can Highway to Alaska.

Retiring from the Forest Service, Howard eventually went to work for OSU in the mail room and thoroughly enjoyed delivering mail and being a small part of campus life. He worked there into his early 80's. After that he took Spanish lessons!

Howard had a voracious appetite for the written word and always had something to read. He also enjoyed music and was the proud owner of several zithers, an accordion, guitar, and ukulele. With Sondra's piano, family gatherings were often filled with music and laughter. He had an interest in coin collecting and was a member of the Corvallis/Albany coin club. He shared the family passion for "game night" before it was called that. An evening of playing the card game "500" was a passion, along with cribbage, scrabble, or any other board game.

Howard is survived by his loving wife Sondra, his daughters, Jill Woodard of Davis, California; Linda Pflughaupt (Randy) of Cincinnati, Ohio and Jody Gallimore (Jeff) of Peoria, Arizona. He is also survived by his step-daughter Susan Collins (Bill) of Vancouver, Washington and nieces, Jeri Marie Wischnofske (Bill) and Jacque Lusk, both of Philomath, Oregon. He enjoyed teaching his grandson's chess and is survived by Aaron and Austin Gallimore, James and Eric Pflughaupt, Jacob Woodard and David Collins. He was a terrific great-uncle and will be missed by Sarah (Aaron) Smith of Philomath and April Schultz of Vale, Oregon.

Family members will remember this remarkable man when they have a Celebration of Life this summer in the Oregon woods.