



Leslie P. Seyb

May 11, 1915 - February 20, 2015

Leslie Philip Seyb, 99, a longtime Corvallis resident, peacefully passed away on Feb. 20.

Les was born on May 11, 1915, above his parents' general store in Franklin, Iowa. His mother taught in a one-room schoolhouse and was proud that Les took early to academics. He skipped two grades and entered college at age 16. Les became the first in three generations to range far beyond the farms of Lee County, Iowa.

He attended Culver-Stockton College and Coe College, graduating from the latter in 1935 with a Bachelor of Science degree in general chemistry. He continued his studies at the University of Iowa, graduating with a doctorate in organic chemistry in 1939. The same year, he married Helen G. Standiford of Glenwood, Iowa.

His first job was in the patent department of Phillips Petroleum Co. in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, where he worked until 1942. He and Helen then moved to Painesville, Ohio, where he joined the research department of Diamond Alkali (later Diamond Shamrock).

During the war, he primarily worked on developing nonflammable paint, which became a critical component in reducing fire damage on warships. After the

war, he continued as group leader at Diamond, where his research branched out into projects involving fatty acids, wetting agents, textile bleaching, synthetic detergents and pesticides.

Les and Helen raised two sons: Stefan, born in 1950, and Stanford, born in 1952.

In 1953, Lee and a colleague traveled on the S.S. United States to Germany to inspect the recovering German chemical industry. Les was intrigued by the pre-immigration family history and he went searching for Seybs in city after city. Among all the wartime displacement of families, he was gratified to find in Mainz the Karl-Erich Seyb family, with whom he maintained a lifelong friendship.

Because of this trip and his German heritage, he came to love Europe and discovered mountaineering in the Alps. With the Iowa Mountaineers, he climbed in the Canadian Rockies, the Tetons and in the Alps, often taking his family on fondly-remembered vacations.

In 1964, he left Diamond and moved to Corvallis to become chief of physical sciences at the newly-formed Pacific Northwest Water Laboratory, which became part of the Environmental Protection Agency. He was assistant director of this organization, which worked to clean up lakes and rivers throughout Oregon, with initial emphasis on the Klamath Basin. Les enjoyed gardening, photography and steelhead fishing on the Alsea. He retired in 1978 and resided in Corvallis ever since.

He and Helen had almost 20 retirement years together, in which they traveled in the United States, the Caribbean, Southeast Asia and the South Pacific. They especially enjoyed their trips to Texas to visit their only grandchild.

Helen passed away in 1998, and a year later Les married Lucille Harnden, with whom he spent many happy years. He and Lucille made a trip to Israel and Egypt in 2000, and Les always enjoyed the family get-togethers at the Harnden home in Philomath.

Les is survived by his wife, Lucille of Philomath; sons Stefan of Corvallis and Stanford of Newport; and granddaughter Ingrid of Houston, Texas. The family wishes to thank the staff of Samaritan Evergreen Hospice House for their comfort and care in his last few days. Please leave your thoughts and memories at www.mchenryfuneralhome.com.

Tribute Wall

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“ I am so sorry for your loss. I worked with Dr. Seyb at the Pacific Northwest Water Laboratory from 1965-1974. He was one of the original employees. I arrived a bit later. I moved on to Washington, D.C., but the Corvallis laboratory folks always were in my heart. He was always instrumental in helping plan the holiday parties, usually providing one of the huge glass bottles for mixing the punch. It is always sad to lose a friend or family member, but he had a terrific life. His legacy will be his humor and willing spirit to always help out. May you have peace as you adjust to the future.

Sincerely,

Linda Smith

Linda Smith - March 09, 2015 at 03:35 PM