



Martin Vitz

May 23, 1919 - October 1, 2012

Martin G. Vitz, 93, of Corvallis passed away on Oct. 1, after a brief illness. Martin was born on May 23, 1919, in Manila, Philippines, where his parents, Frank and Bessie, were teachers at the Philippine Normal School (now the University of the Philippines). In 1921, the family returned to Superior, Wis., where Martin grew up with his two younger brothers, John and Bob. The trolley cars of Superior sparked in Martin a lifelong interest in trains. He and his brothers made the most of Wisconsin winters with cross-country skiing and sledding.

During World War II, Martin served in the U.S. Army artillery on a South Pacific atoll and in the occupying forces in Saipan. Martin sustained a back injury during the war. After the war, Martin returned to Superior, where he bumped into Eleanor Burgess, the smart redhead he had met in fourth grade. They reconnected when he walked into the power company to pay his bill. They married two years later.

Martin earned his bachelor's and master's degrees on the GI Bill at the Stout Institute in Menomonie, Wis. (now the University of Wisconsin — Stout). He sang bass in the university choir. Martin and Eleanor's daughter, Alice, was born while Martin finished his schooling. The family moved to Tucson, Ariz., for Martin's health, and three more children (Frank, Kathleen and Nora) were added to the family. Martin became a teacher.

In 1959, the family moved to Southern California. Martin's teaching career spanned more than 30 years and included stints at the School for the Deaf in

Riverside, Calif.; Northview High School in Covina, Calif.; and Hoover High School in Glendale, Calif. He taught industrial arts, history and math. He volunteered as a Boy Scout leader and was advisor to the American Field Service Club. Through the years he opened the family home to five foreign students. During school vacations, Martin took his family camping and hiking throughout California, from Death Valley to the High Sierras. Uncles, aunts, cousins and friends often joined the adventures. His children could always count on his attendance at their track meets, choir concerts and theatrical productions.

Martin was as handy with a saw or a wrench as he was with a sewing machine. Over a decade, he constructed his and Eleanor's retirement home, helped his son build his first car (a dune buggy) and sewed prom dresses for his daughters.

Martin and Eleanor retired in Palm Desert, Calif. In 1992, they moved to Oregon. Two years later, Eleanor passed away. Martin was a member of Calvin Presbyterian Church in Corvallis. Over his lifetime, Martin explored Mexico, Europe and Australia via train.

Martin lived independently at Linus Oakes Retirement Village in Roseburg and later at the Regent in Corvallis until shortly before his death. In his final weeks, Martin became a teacher once again. He welcomed medical students and staff members into his hospital room to learn firsthand about his rare cancer. To the end, he was quick to share his silly humor and goofy puns (two-thirds of a pun: P.U.).

Martin is survived by his brothers, John Vitz and Bob Vitz and wife Julie; his children and their spouses, Alice and Ron Tucker, Frank Vitz and Vandy Savage, Kathie Vitz and Chris Wong, and Nora Vitz Harrison and Jon Harrison; seven grandchildren, Shane Johnson, Tessa Isett, Brendon Vitz, Cortland Vitz, Kevin Vitz-Wong, James Vitz-Wong and Michael Vitz-Wong; one great-granddaughter, Payton Isett; and his little white dog, Jesse.

Per Martin's request, a private service for family will be scheduled.

Remembrances can be made to the American Cancer Society.

“Thank you to the Portland Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Oregon Health and Science University, Corvallis Manor and Benton Hospice Service for their gentle care of our father.”