



Robert L. Powelson

September 23, 1929 - March 9, 2015

Bob Powelson, fly fisherman extraordinaire, passionate gardener, boatman, loving husband, and caring father died of natural causes at his home in Corvallis. He was 85 years old.

Robert Loran Powelson was born in Salt Lake City to Loran George and Mabel Eliza Powelson. Bob was an adventurous, innovative youth. He loved the outdoors, and at an early age took up fishing and skiing.

As a young teen he built a go-kart that was powered by an old Maytag washing machine motor. He and his friends would drive their go-karts up through Emigration and Parley canyons in the mountains of northeastern Utah.

A few years later he and three friends hiked 75 miles into the Uinta Mountains. It was there that Bob learned a valuable science lesson.

The boys had packed dried split peas and beans to cook for meals on their hike, but quickly learned that at 8,000 feet, water boils but not hot enough to soften beans and peas. Fortunately, they found a package of Bisquick in an abandoned campsite, which they used to make biscuits that were wolfed down.

Bob graduated from East High School and then attended Utah State University, where he earned a Bachelor of Science degree in botany and plant pathology in 1951. During his undergraduate years, he was enrolled in the ROTC program.

Upon graduation he was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant and served in the

U.S. Air Force for four years, from 1951 to 1955. His first assignment was club officer at Frances E. Warren Air Force Base in Cheyenne, Wyoming, at the time, a remote and rugged place! One of the posted regulations on base was “no shooting of buffalo from the barracks windows.”

His next two posts were in Germany: Bitburg and Fürstenfeldbruck AFBs, where he was the chief supply officer.

Following his honorable discharge from the Air Force, he returned to Utah State University, where in 1956 he earned a Master of Science degree in plant pathology. He then moved to Corvallis to attend Oregon State University, his final education destination.

After completion of a doctoral degree in 1959, he joined the faculty, where he led a research team on the epidemiology and management of wheat disease. In the early years of his faculty position he taught an undergraduate plant pathology course. Later, he taught a graduate-level course in epidemiology and disease control. In December 1984 he retired from OSU and spent the next 30 years enjoying the many passions of his life.

In 1970 he built a McKenzie-style wooden drift boat. The boat was used often for fishing expeditions and then meticulously maintained in the off- season. In the winter Bob drifted the Alsea and Siletz rivers, spin fishing for steelhead, and in the summer months you would find him fly fishing for summer steelhead on the South Santiam and the Deschutes rivers.

His favorite fishing experience was floating the Deschutes River from Mack Canyon to its mouth. Each August Bob and his wife, Mary, along with three other couples, spent four days and three nights on the river, fishing by day, eating fresh-caught steelhead in the evenings, and sleeping on cots under the stars by night.

Bob especially enjoyed camping with friends in the high Cascade Lakes such as Davis Lake and Crane Prairie Reservoir, where the focus was fly fishing for rainbow trout, playing cards, telling tall tales and enjoying good food.

For many years the Powelsons would join their friends for a trip to the beaches of Western Washington and Oregon for razor clam digging — up at

the crack of dawn, down on the beaches a couple of hours before low tide, where limits would be caught and cleaned before 8 a.m.

Bob was a Master Gardener, and growing fruits and vegetables was a lifelong passion at which he excelled. He strived to make his vegetable/fruit garden one of the healthiest and most productive in the area.

Besides enjoying the fresh produce, which he generously shared with friends and family, he also made his own soups, sauces and jams, which he either canned or froze. In the beds around the house, there always were flowers in bloom for his wife to enjoy.

Bob is survived by his wife, Mary; his sister, Judy Folsom of Salt Lake City; his daughters, Jan Day (Michael Day) of Salem and Jo Lynn Moniz (Lawrence Moniz) of Seattle; stepson Mark McCoy of Kenai, Alaska; four grandchildren, Stephanie Colletta (nee Moniz), Brandon Day, Catherine Moniz and Jennifer Day; and a step-grandson, Hunter McCoy.

A private memorial service is planned for this summer. Donations in Bob's honor can be given to his favorite charity, the Nature Conservancy of Oregon, 821 S.E. 14th Ave., Portland, OR 97214.