



Roman A. Schmitt

November 13, 1924 - September 29, 2016

Roman Augustine Schmitt, 90, of Corvallis passed away Thursday, Sept. 29, at the Samaritan Evergreen Hospice House in Albany from complications after a bacterial infection.

The funeral mass will be at 12:30 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 6, at St. Mary's Catholic Church in Corvallis. A reception will follow at the service in the upper social hall. Funeral arrangements are being handled by McHenry Funeral Home.

One of five brothers, Roman was born on a farm in Johnsburg, Illinois, on Nov. 13, 1925. He served in the Army during World War II. He studied at Illinois College and then completed his masters and Ph.D. in chemistry from the University of Chicago. In 1953, he enjoyed reminiscing about his student days with such notables as Enrico Fermi, Harold Urey and Nathan Sugarman.

He was a founding staff member of the company General Atomic in 1956. In 1969 he was invited to become a full professor in the department of nuclear chemistry at Oregon State University where he taught and performed research for more than 30 years. Roman was one of a handful of scientists picked to study the lunar samples brought back by the Apollo missions, and in 1972 he won the George P. Merrill Award by the Council of the National Academy of Sciences for his pioneering work on the determination of rare earth elements.

Roman enjoyed geology, and his office and home were filled with mineral samples and rare elements. He enjoyed golfing, biking, hiking and his daily walks. He was a prolific photographer. Later in life he was an avid golf watcher and was a big fan of the Oregon State baseball program.

A longtime member of St. Mary's Parish and the People of Praise Community, Roman spent many years as a volunteer chaplain at the Oregon State Penitentiary, driving from Corvallis to Salem every week until he felt he could no longer do so. He enjoyed visiting the homebound and aging as a Eucharistic minister and friend.

Roman was married to his wife, Jean Marie Vertovec for 62 years. In addition to his wife, Roman is survived by four children, Joseph Schmitt of Corvallis, Mary Schmitt of Salem, Peter Schmitt of Blodgett and Katherine Harvey of Forest Grove; four grandchildren, Kathrynne MacVicar Geisler of Salem, Emiliana MacVicar of Salem, John MacVicar Jr. of Salem and Kahlie Haney of Philomath; six great-grandchildren; and many, many other friends, colleagues and former students.

Previous Events

Funeral Mass

OCT 6. 12:30 PM (PT)

St. Mary's Catholic Church
501 NW 25th St.
Corvallis, OR

Reception

OCT 6 (PT)

St. Mary's Catholic Church
501 NW 25th St.
Corvallis, OR

Tribute Wall

EM

“ Grandpa, during my lifetime of having your insightful and loving guidance I have been more than blessed. In your passing (and now Gram and Mom) there have been a lot of changes and a lot of separation. It's so strange to go from having a huge family get together on holidays to having to come up with my own traditions. I hope that I will continue to hear your voice and love throughout my days and for the rest of my life. There are so many things I have learned from you and you were right, the hardest lesson I'll ever learn, I'll learn alone. Had I not had your beautiful example of Christ's love, I never would have known what it was when it came for me. I went against your best advice to "learn to tread water" vs "swimming against the tide" and now I'm 2.5 years into the biggest lesson I've ever had to face. I should have listened. "Be still". I should have implemented. Now, "be still" is my lesson to teach COR and I'm excited to see you come through me as a parent. Thank you for your love. Thank you for your dedication. Thank you for everything.



I know you're watching out for us. I know you're covering us with love and care. I love you.

Emily - December 01, 2020 at 04:57 PM

EM

Happy Birthday Gramps

Emily - November 13, 2022 at 11:50 AM

PH

Roman was a friend of mine at St Mary's Church, in the PoP Community, and as a scientist. I often went to visit him at his lab and he would regale me with stories of comet and cometesimal impacts, rare earths newly discovered, marine mass extinctions, hydrothermal smokers, their unique ecology and species, and the evidence for each. He was a sharp mind, a generous friend, and a man who loved the Lord. I will always remember him for his generous spirit, loving heart, and the time he took to teach me how to be a better scientist. He always had time for my visits. God bless you friend. See you down the road... Paul Hessburg

Paul Hessburg - September 21, 2025 at 09:48 PM