

Saying goodbye to Uncle Bob

By **Craig F. Eisenbeis**
Correspondent

When my wife’s charming, but eccentrically goofball, Uncle Bob suddenly hit me with a very serious request, believe me, I paid attention. “When I die,” he suddenly said one day, “I want you to promise to scatter my ashes at the top of Black Butte.”

Naturally, I assured him that I would. That was several years ago, and I had no idea what his poignant request would eventually entail.

The Uncle Bob in this case is World War II pilot and longtime Black Butte Ranch resident Bob Lowery, who founded the Sisters Dixieland Jazz Festival. One of the early Black Butte Ranch owners, and Black Butte wine club founder, Uncle Bob was a notable presence at the Ranch for the better part of 20 years in the 1970s and 1980s — although there are few of his peers left at the ranch to remember him.

Still, with four family members still in Sisters and others in Bend, he certainly has not been forgotten. Uncle Bob has actually been gone for a while. He passed away, in Arizona, a few weeks short of his 90th birthday five years ago this month. I’ve been waiting all that time to fulfill my promise to him; but, as it turned out, his widow, Alma, wasn’t all that ready to

actually part with him. This month, however, more than a dozen of us showed up on October 14 for a final farewell, with participants coming from Oregon, California, Mexico, and Hawaii. When I made my promise to him, I had envisioned a somber and solitary trek to the summit, rather than an entourage like this one with members ranging in age from eight months to 75 years, most of whom are not exactly outdoor adventurers.

Much of the credit for making the event possible goes to Uncle Bob’s great-nephew, Kevin Chang. Kevin, executive director of Kua’aina Ulu Auamo (a community-based natural resource management organization in Hawaii), knew Bob not only as his great-uncle, but also as his stepfather-in-law! You see, Kevin married the daughter of Uncle Bob’s third wife and affectionately refers to his mother-in-law/uncle’s wife as “Mama Tia” (Mother/Aunt).

My wife, Kathi, remembers her father’s brother as a fun-loving jokester, who pulled off a lot of silly stunts with her dad; but she also remembers him as the devoted brother who gave her father one of his kidneys in an effort to prolong her dad’s life. Uncle Bob greatly admired his older brother; and, when Bill Lowery joined the Marines for World War II,

Bob Lowery left high school early to join the Army Air Corps. Uncle Bob went on to become a C-47 pilot, dropping paratroopers over Europe behind enemy lines. Kathi always compared her uncle, both in appearance and behavior, to actor-comedian Dick Van Dyke. Her nephew, Kevin Chang, remembers Uncle Bob in much the same way.

“My Uncle Bob was the first comedian to come into my life,” he said. “He instilled in me a Buddhist sentiment to be playful and hold onto a sense of humor through life’s ups and downs. He was a trickster who delighted in victimizing my grandma (Bob’s sister-in-law) for my benefit.”

On the way up Black Butte, Bob’s other niece, Carol Lowery Chang, had this to say: “Uncle Bob is the man who brought us all here together. We’re sad, yet quick to smile as we look back, counting the memories step by step. He had every Dean Martin record ever made! He loved good wine; and he loved to fish and hunt with his brother — my dad, Bill — especially here in Central Oregon. He was a big tease, and a favorite target was our mom, ‘Nanny.’ For example, in our two-car caravan to his home at Black Butte, he led her on wild rides around every tree, sometimes doing figure-eights and intentionally going



PHOTO BY CRAIG F. EISENBEIS

Atop Black Butte, family members attend a memorial service for longtime Black Butte Ranch resident Bob Lowery.

into the wrong driveway. Bob would drive people nuts whether he was at the wheel of a car or piloting a tiny plane that was usually flying on empty.”

Although this event was scheduled weeks in advance, in a very narrow time window for everyone to participate, the weather turned out to be a sparkingly beautiful, although chilly, day for a sunny October climb of Black Butte. Uncle Bob’s memorial service, at the butte’s summit, was officiated by his great-nephew, Jason Eisenbeis.

After the ceremony, Uncle Bob’s ashes were scattered atop Black Butte, in accordance with his wishes. I certainly don’t think Uncle Bob had any idea that his request to me would set in motion such a memorable family event, but I know he would have been pleased with the result.

On the way down from the memorial service, we all continued to reminisce about Uncle Bob, who never had any biological children of his own, yet still managed to create and bring together a diverse and loving family.

Powderpuff action...

The tradition of Powderpuff Football continued during Homecoming week.

PHOTO BY JERRY BALDOCK

NuggetNews.com

FALL INTO SAVINGS!

\$25 OFF

ANY SERVICE WE PROVIDE

Not valid with other offers or discounts; ad must be presented at time of service; good through 10-31-18.

541.549.1605
www.ponderosaheating.com

PONDEROSA
HEATING & COOLING
CC# 14008

Not Using Your RV? Want It Sold?

LARRY'S RV
PARTS SERVICE
SALES

CONSIGNMENTS WANTED!

SEE OUR COMPLETE INVENTORY AT WWW.LARRYSRV.COM

541-923-4564
3000 S. Hwy. 97, Redmond, Oregon

SISTERS COFFEE CO.

Introducing Our New Packaging

Open 6am-6pm Coffee Roasted Daily 273 W Hood Ave. Sisters, OR

NEWS/TALK FM 100.1
1110 KBND
DEPEND ON US

HAVE YOU HEARD?
DR. WATTENBURG'S
TALK RADIO SHOW

YourCare ~ YourHealth

is expanding to two hours starting in November. Tune into www.kbnd.com from **5 to 7 p.m. every Sunday.** Still 4 to 5 p.m. through October. Call in, **541-388-1110.**

541-548-2899
3818 SW 21st Pl., Ste. 100
Redmond • Open every day
yourcaremedical.com

WALK-IN • URGENT CARE • OCCUPATIONAL MEDICINE • X-RAY

NEW! Premium Interest Checking

- Tiered rates of return
- No monthly fees for balances \$2,500+
- FREE checks
- Use your debit card anywhere—we'll refund up to \$10/month in ATM fees!

MidOregon Credit Union
good friends. great service.®

In Sisters at 703 N. Larch St. (across from post office)

541-382-1795
www.midoregon.com