

Obituaries

Gordon Douglas Halsten

October 4, 1922 – August 4, 2020

Gordon Douglas Halsten, better known as “Spud,” passed away peacefully in his home on Tuesday morning, August 4.

Gordon was born in Portland on October 4, 1922, to Mattie and Howard Halsten and was the youngest of five boys.

Well known for his mischievous sense of humor, and friendly disposition, he frequently regaled his family and friends with stories of his daring childhood adventures. From rafting down the Columbia River to Astoria to hitching rides on trains going across the country, and climbing to the top of the St. John’s Bridge (!), his love of travel and adventure was evident at an early age.

While attending Roosevelt High School, he met the love of his life, Dorothy Ruth Smith, and they continued their courtship as World War II began. He joined the Coast Guard in 1941, and was stationed in Alaska, which was still a territory at the time. He often said he felt privileged to have served in Alaska “where no one was shooting at me.” During his tour of duty there, he served as Captain of the Port, Chief Security Officer, Head Immigration Officer, and Head of Naval Intelligence, combined with his duties as radio operator.

After the war was over, he married Dorothy and quickly moved back to Alaska, where they raised their three daughters, Kathleen, Christine, and Deborah. His first station

was at Sheep Mountain, located above the Matanuska Glacier. His skills as a radio operator transferred easily to his new career as an air traffic controller and he served as station manager in Sitka where he owned a fishing boat; Kotzebue, located above the Arctic Circle; and Northway, Alaska. During a brief relocation in Tennessee, he achieved another ambition and became a pilot. Eventually he transferred back to Anchorage, Alaska, during which time he built a cabin at Lake Susitna where he enjoyed the peace and quiet, watching wildlife and canoeing. The family was residing in Anchorage when the great Alaskan earthquake of 1964 occurred. He was working in the tower at the time and was fortunate to not be injured when the building was damaged.

Another life-long interest was music, including playing his guitar and harmonica. He and Dorothy also passed on their love of reading to their daughters and Spud was always in the middle of yet another Louis L’Amour Western. He also delighted in the poetry of Robert Service and his tales of the Far North.

He greatly enjoyed being an air traffic controller, and succeeded in that highly stressful occupation due to his calm and steady approach to difficult situations. He continued his successful career with the FAA before retiring in 1972 with 28 years experience.

He later embarked on another adventure when he canoed approximately

500 miles down the Yukon River with a friend, from Whitehorse to Dawson City, Yukon Territory. From that time on, his “official” nickname was Yukon Spud.

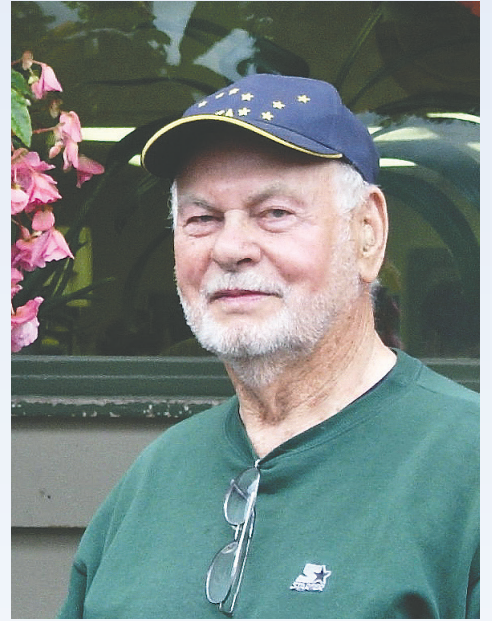
Gordon and Dorothy eventually moved to Sisters, where he became involved in numerous civic organizations as well as being instrumental in starting the first food bank in Sisters. He also volunteered for several seasons as a fire lookout at Green Ridge. His earlier experiences as a radio operator came to the fore again, as he became an avid ham radio operator. “KB7ORK” was his call sign and he kept a map with the locations pinned of all the places he contacted including Pitcairn Island and Antarctica. He was also a regular fixture at local coffee shops, where he would swap stories with his friends. Gordon and Dorothy attended Sisters Baptist Church as well as the Chapel in the Pines in Camp Sherman. They continued their love of traveling and at one point took a camper trailer trip across the United States. They also enjoyed canoeing in Central Oregon especially at Hosmer Lake. Another favorite adventure was a family reunion trip to England, France, Ireland and Wales, which became the source of so many fond memories.

After his beloved wife Dorothy passed away in 1998, he continued to reside in their Tollgate home with daughter Deborah and often returned to the cabin in Alaska during the summers. He achieved another

lifelong goal of touring Israel in 2006, which he greatly enjoyed. And in 2016, he was able to participate in the Honor Flight for World War II veterans to Washington D.C., which meant so very much to him.

Always ready with a story and a laugh, and with a twinkle in his eye, his cheerful attitude was a gift to those fortunate enough to call him father and friend. His Christian faith was very important to him and he never hesitated to help those in need whenever and wherever he could. His family will miss him greatly but are so very thankful that he is now at home in heaven, enjoying yet one more Great Adventure.

Spud is survived by his daughters, Kathleen Hofmann (Larry) of Phoenix, Arizona; Christine Ervin (Dave) of Portland; Deborah Halsten, Sisters; grandson, David Hofmann (Nikki) of Phoenix, Arizona; and great-grandchildren Trey, Shea,



and Paisley. He was preceded in death by his parents and four brothers.

A Celebration of Life will be held Saturday, August 22, at 2 p.m. in the Fireside Room at Sisters Community Church. COVID-19 guidelines will be in place.

Gordon will join his wife Dorothy in being interred with military honors at Willamette National Cemetery in Portland.

Contributions gratefully accepted at Hospice of Redmond, Oregon.

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