

Community Voices



THERE WAS SOMETHING ABOUT HARRY

BY LARRY BACON
Special to Siuslaw News

Harry Albert Tammen (pictured above with his wife Anne) — just plain Harry to most folks — checked out of this life Oct. 15 —and what a life it was.

If you didn't know Harry, you missed out. He was a brash little guy with a round face, wry sense of humor, Jersey accent and a crooked grin who could talk about his adventures for hours and never become boring.

Sometime before he died in Eugene, he told a friend his long-held goal was to live a life filled with fun and retire early. Well, he did both. During 88 years of living, he squeezed every drop of fun he could out of life and left his own indelible stamp on it. Not only did he seek fun and adventure, somehow the powers that be just seemed to send it his way.

Good stuff he never would have expected just kept happening. Kind of like a guy with a knack for drawing to an inside straight and usually winning.

Here's a rundown on Harry's life.

A kid from Hoboken, N.J., who spent some time as a projectionist in his home-town movie house, joins the Air Force in 1951, and the Air Force detailers decide that someone with that kind of motion picture experience should be packing a movie camera rather than a rifle, so they send him to Hal Roach Studio in Hollywood for training to become part of an Air Force film crew.

Ten months of training with an eight-pound Belle and Howe movie camera included helping shoot film for television shows, and it wasn't long before Harry was rubbing shoulders with celebrities. The show he worked on most was "My Little Margie," starring Gale Storm. He remembered that he and Gale became "good buddies," eating lunch together every day in the cafeteria.

Fate smiled on Harry at the Hal Roach studio, because rather than going to Korea with the other trainees, he was selected to be part of a six-man crew to make an Air Force documentary in England in conjunction with Queen Elizabeth's 1953 coronation. He didn't get to go inside Westminster Abbey, but he stood outside to film her leave in a gold horse-drawn coach.

Harry ended up spending three years in Europe working with a crew making a variety of films used in recruiting, training and elsewhere. He saw places he never thought he would see and enjoyed experiences he would never have dreamed of — like a 15-minute private audience with English Prime Minister Winston Churchill. Harry and the BBC were filming an awards ceremony at which Churchill was to honor some American airmen who saved

a family in a flood. The BBC crew forgot some sound gear, and went to go retrieve it. Rather than shoo Harry out, Churchill chatted with him while the two waited.

"That was one of the highlights of my life," Harry remembered.

His only regret is that Churchill lit up a cigar, but never offered him one.

The other highlight of his life abroad was meeting a curly-headed blonde English girl named Anne Frances David. She was 19, a knockout, and had come with a group of girls to the base where Harry was stationed to receive instruction from American GIs on the game of softball.

Harry asked her out for a date the following week, and then on a second date during which he asked her to marry him. Nine months later they tied the knot.

Harry firmly believed he and Anne were a perfect match. And what's more they made each other laugh — a whole lot. When Harry died, they had been married 65 years. Side by side along their road through life, they shared all the joy, sorrows and adventures that came their way. And the love they found so long ago in England always endured.

When Harry got out of the Air Force in 1955, he brought his bride back to New Jersey, went to college for a while, and soon decided to leave the cold and snow of New Brunswick for California. The couple headed west in a new Chevy with \$68 in travel money and ended up in Hollywood, where Harry parlayed his experience with film work into a job as a color technician with

Technicolor Inc.

Soon he was running his own department and rubbing shoulders with the rich and famous.

Directors like Otto Preminger and Alfred Hitchcock would come to Harry's shop to see "rushes," the screening of processed film from their most recent shooting.

Harry and Anne enjoyed going to local live theater in which many stars and stars-to-be would perform. Never shy about talking his way backstage, Harry got to meet people like Julie Andrews, Marilyn Monroe and Jimmy Stewart. He even somehow ended up at a backstage gathering at which Debbie Reynolds hand-fed him pieces of watermelon.

The Tammens had a home in Chevy Chase Canyon, a good life, but no children after 11 years of marriage. So they adopted a son, whom they named David Sean. Later, Harry would say having that little boy was "the most beautiful" part of his and Anne's life together. But a tragic auto accident took David from them at age six in the summer of 1970. After that, their life in California was not the same, so they pulled up stakes in 1972 and moved to Florence.

There they lucked into a job as caretakers at Heceta House, the former home for keepers at the historic Heceta Head Lighthouse north of Florence. When Harry and Anne arrived, the house was an off-campus retreat and instructional location for Lane Community College.

The Tammens lived and worked at Heceta House for 17 years, enjoyed residing in one of the most beautiful spots in the United States

and gained somewhat of a celebrity status themselves for multiple personal encounters with the ghost said to haunt the house. They even learned the ghost's name, "Rue," through a session with a ouija board.

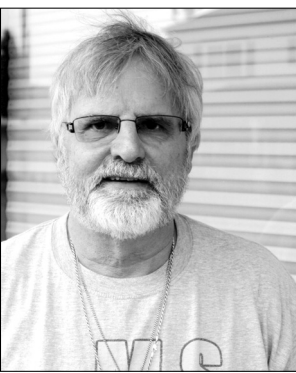
Harry once said Rue was like part of the family, and rather than scary it was "kind of exciting" living with her.

While at Heceta House, Harry sometimes shot video news clips for a Portland TV station. He and Anne also worked part-time for the Siuslaw News. And they built a house in Yachats.

Eventually, wanderlust set in, so in 1989 they sold the house and bought a truck and travel trailer used for a four-year odyssey across America that ended in 1993 in Kissimmee, Fla., where they bought a small home in a retirement community. They enjoyed socializing with other retirees, going on cruises and basking in the sun. But after four hurricanes in one year they returned to Oregon in 2006 to settle in a Eugene apartment complex for seniors, where Harry spent his last years dealing with a variety of health problems.

Always gregarious, Harry once said the friends he made along his way through life helped make life worth living. And one constant in his life, he said, was a desire "to always do the right thing." He was mostly happy about the way his life turned out. And one thing certain, he made sure that Harry Albert Tammen will be a hard man to forget.

No services are planned. Harry's ashes are to be scattered in the Pacific Ocean, just as his son's were.



BY LLOYD LITTLE
Special to Siuslaw News

In 1986 I was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis (MS). When I asked, "What should I do now?" The doctor replied, "If the pain gets too great then come down to my office and I will give you a steroid shot."

In 1986 the diagnosis of MS was difficult to deter-

LIFE WITH MS — TREATMENTS FOR MS

mine. The symptoms of the disease varied from person to person. Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) can detect soft tissue damage, but there were few hospitals in Oregon with an MRI machine. A spinal tap, drawing fluid from the spinal cord to analyze, was another method. Either of these two methods could show an MS diagnosis.

The treatment offered by my neurologist was unacceptable to me. In 1986 there were few options for the treatment of MS. Gradually the medical research, through generous donations, discovered potential MS treatments. In the early

1990s, the drug Betaseron was given the green light by the FDA. There was a list of the side effects clearly stated and the ever familiar words "This drug MAY or MAY NOT reduce your exacerbations." This drug was said to slow down or reduce the impact of MS exacerbations for Relapsing Remitting Multiple Sclerosis (RRMS), my MS diagnosis.

After an exacerbation leaving me with less mobility and greater pain, my wife and I decided to try Betaseron. The every-other-day injections caused pain in my body and pocketbook. This treatment was meant to be my forever treatment in my

battle against the progression of my MS. The flu-like side effects came as warned. For two years, I or my wife injected this drug into my body.

Could I truthfully say the treatment was working? No I could not.

It was at that time I decided the side effects and expense were too much and I would carry on without MS drug treatments.

Through the years, MS research has discovered a number of additional drugs available for all stages of MS. These drugs are extremely expensive and, without monetary assistance from multiple sources, people

with MS would not be able to afford these treatments.

Each month our MS support group meets and we talk about the growing number of MS treatments on the market, some of which are talked about in Momentum Magazine, a publication of National Multiple Sclerosis Society.

Each person in our group has symptoms needing relief. If there is a drug helpful for them, they may ask their neurologist about its use.

One of the newest potential breakthrough treatments for MS is the CBD of marijuana. This oil is said to be effective in reducing several symptoms of MS with no

side effects.

However, not enough research is yet available for me to feel safe in trying this treatment. My current treatment is gabapentin for pain. My family and friends support me and help me when needed. The adage "If it ain't broke don't fix it" keeps me from altering my approach to MS.

Each treatment available today also has a list of potential side effects from its use. Each individual MS warrior will need to make their own decision based on their own reasons. MS research continues and a breakthrough treatment or cure may just be around the corner.



BY KAREN D. NICHOLS
Special to Siuslaw News

For safety, we hired a workman to chop down

MORAL OF THE STORY — TREE HUGGER

some leaning trees from our wooded lot. Watching from the window reminded me of another experience with tree trimmers.

Lining the streets in Huntington Beach grew majestic palms, sprouting huge green fronds, each 50 to 60 years old with trunks three feet in diameter. The one in front of our house was gorgeous. Each morning I awoke admiring its graceful fronds through our

dormer window.

The newspaper mentioned several of the trees were diseased and for safety they were being removed. The disease would eventually take all the palms. Sadly, I witnessed large removal equipment on various streets assisting the demise of the iconic trees.

When I noticed that our palm was turning brown and losing fronds, I felt helpless. Was there no way to save it?

One day, the tree-murders stopped in front of our house.

"No! Please don't!" I begged the workmen.

"Okay. It's too late to start. We'll come next month," they said.

With a month's reprieve, I had to do something. I hugged the tree. "Please don't die."

Maybe it needed water, after which, I hugged it again. "I love you. We've only got a

month. You need to get well, now!"

Each day I talked to my tree. I touched it. I patted it. I hugged it and I prayed.

Ralph said, "Are you nuts?"


A week later, the dead fronds dropped to the ground. I touched it. I talked to it. I patted it. I hugged it and I prayed.

Each day I spent time with my tree. Each day, as if by magic, new fronds appeared.


Somehow the workmen didn't chop it down the next month. A reprieve! I continued my daily treatments. A few weeks later my tree exuded wellness and beauty.

We lived there two more years with our extraordinary tree. Then we moved. Driving by several months later, the tree was gone.


Moral: Never underestimate the power of a hug and a kind word.




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