



SLETTEN, HAROLD 'HAL' LEWIS

Co B 383rd Infantry

8/14/24 – 7/28/13

Our beloved father passed away unexpectedly following complications from surgery. Only days before he was taking 10-mile bicycle rides, climbing ladders to trim his hedges, and changing the brakes on his '78 Cadillac.

Dad was born the 5th of nine children on a farm near Churchs Ferry, North Dakota. He survived the Great Depression and excelled at North Dakota Agricultural College at Fargo (now NDSU), but he interrupted his studies when he enlisted in the United States Army in 1943 to serve his country in World War II. He was sent to Kalamazoo College to study engineering, but the program was disbanded to expand the war effort.

Dad went to California for amphibious training, and was assigned to the rifle company of the 96th Infantry Division. Amidst the stress of nearly drowning when ordered to jump off a pier into the ocean (he did not know how to swim and for the rest of his life hated the water), he did notice that the weather was really nice there. He could not know at the time, but one day he would return.

He was in the 1st wave of troops landing in Leyte, Philippines on October 20, 1944 and was wounded in action on October 27, 1944. He recovered from his wounds, and was sent back to the front lines for another critical 1st wave landing, this time on Okinawa Japan on Easter Sunday in 1945. He was again wounded during battle, but this time he was sent back to the USA for medical treatment.

For meritorious achievement in ground combat he received the bronze star medal, two purple hearts, and a Presidential unit citation. He was honorably discharged on August 9, 1945 which was just five days before his 21st birthday and VJ Day (August 14, 1945).

Dad immediately went back to school and earned a Bachelor of Science Degree in mechanical engineering from NDSU in 1948. He graduated summa cum laude and was appointed to honorary scholastic societies Phi Kappa Phi and Tau Beta Pi, and joined the engineering fraternity Sigma Phi Delta.

After a short stint with General Electric Co., he was accepted for study at the prestigious California Technical Institute, Pasadena, CA, and earned a Master of Science Degree in mechanical engineering. For the next 34 years, he developed innovative cooling systems for nuclear power reactors, and was expert on

issues related to the fast breeder reactor, thermodynamics and fluid mechanics. Dad's engineering excellence led to his personal assignment of numerous U.S. patents and publications. He retired in 1984, but he never stopped looking at the world through his "engineer's eyes." In 1954 he married Barbara Kay Engel and they settled in sunny Northridge, California. Dad is survived by his four children Sandra Knierim (John) Puyallup, WA; Steven (Ellen) Los Angeles, CA; Karen Allen (Scott) Tallahassee, FL; and Eric (Julie) Ventura, CA. Surviving grandchildren: Rebekka, Sara, Elizabeth, John, Karl, Daniel, Kristen, Connor, Jeff, Greg, Bryan, Jason, Eric, Noah, Olivia, Sophia; and great-grandchildren: Pearl and Caleb. Two brothers also survive him.

Over the years Dad has enjoyed the company of his "brothers in arms" at annual reunions of the 96th Infantry Division "Deadeyes." In fact, he was planning to attend the reunion this year in San Diego, CA on the day of his death. He has been a regular at his local senior citizens center where he loved to dance to Big Band swing music, and play pool and a few hands of bridge. He was an avid bicyclist, tinkerer of all things mechanical, and a proud member of the Sons of Norway Norrona Lodge.

Our Dad left this world to be with his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ in who he had ultimate faith and gratitude for all of his many blessings. He departed us at the top of his form; strong, private and fiercely independent. Dad was an honorable man with brilliant mind and a tender heart.

Whenever there is a mechanical problem to be solved, we will always ask, "What would Dad do?" We, and many others, will miss him dearly.

The Memorial Service will be held at Oakwood Memorial Park in Chatsworth, CA on August 10, 2013 at 10:00am.