

Wilbert "Skeets" Mehrer



The world became a lot smaller and much less interesting on August 3, 2011 when Skeets crashed his Commanche airplane near Camas airport. He was born on May 21, 1927, also the day Lindbergh landed in Paris. From this, it was fated that he would be passionate about flying. He was raised dirt poor in a Mennonite community in Lustre Montana. After the family lost their farm in the depression, they eventually settled in Portland Oregon.

Due to Pearl Harbor, Skeets joined the Merchant Marines and served aboard numerous liberty ships during World War II. He was introduced to his wife, Barbara, through his bunk mate. It was love at first sight.

Even though Skeets served in the Merchant Marines, he was drafted for the Army for the Korean conflict. He was wounded in Korea and ended up serving the remainder of his stint in Okinawa.

After his return to civilian service, he held various jobs as a fireman, policeman, and ended up joining the Plumbers and Pipefitters union and worked as a furnace repairman and pipe fitter. He also was a builder. He built and, with his wife, Barbara, ran numerous rental duplexes.

He was also a loyal Mason and an Elk.

He was passionate about flying but also would try anything new. He learned scuba diving in the 1960's and spear fished to supplement the dinner table. He also owned various autos, boats and motorcycles over his lifetime. Friends always looked forward to seeing him, wondering what toy he would bring this time.

He restored vintage cars, boats, and aircraft. After retirement, he restored 10 1940's vintage Stearmans. He also owned two T-6's, one of which was a racing aircraft. The racing T-6, called "Licketly Split" was raced in Reno for 24 years. It was a popular entry. He and his close friend, Jack Dickie, were proud to have the largest team of volunteer friends at Reno. The pit also had a fun meter, which was usually off the charts in fun.

He loved his friends and family and was always looking for ways to have a party. He was generous with his time, intellect, effort, ideas, and funds. At his "clubhouse" in Camas, the coffee pot was always on and the bar was always open.

One of his last flights was giving a first airplane ride to his 5 year old great grandson Ryan. Ryan's comment "AWESOME!!" The passion for flying continues to the next generation.

To quote his grandson Nathan "He touched more people in a day than most do in a lifetime".

He will be seriously missed by so many people. The hole he leaves in our lives is endlessly deep, and unfillable.

He is survived by his wife, Barbara Mehrer, son Kent Mehrer, daughter Patricia Whitney, son in law Art Whitney, grandchildren Emily Whitney, Nathan Whitney, Braden Whitney, Lindsay Thompson, and great grandchildren, Kassandra Whitney, Nathaniel Whitney, and Ryan Whitney.

Service will be on Friday, August 12, 2011 at 12:30 at Lincoln Memorial Funeral Home. In lieu of flowers, the family asks that donations be made to the Shriners Hospital of Portland.