

ALAN TRUE AXTELL

July 5, 1918 – January 20, 2020

Alan Axtell of Medford, OR died on January 20, 2020. He was a decorated World War II bomber pilot with a distinguished career in radio and television broadcasting and advertising.

Alan was born in 1918 in Chicago, Illinois to Warren Foss Axtell and Cora Dorothy Storms Axtell. As a junior high school student during the Depression, Alan and his sister Dorothy helped their struggling family by selling fruits and vegetables on the streets of Chicago. Upon graduation from Carl Schurz High School in 1935, he worked a variety of jobs in banking and accounting until the outbreak of World War II.

Alan was inducted into the Army in April 1942 and became an aviation cadet in the Army Air Force. He served as a B-17 flight instructor until his overseas assignment in 1944. As a First Lieutenant with the 346th Bomb Squadron, 99th Bomber Group, 15th Air Force, Foggia, Italy, Alan piloted twelve missions bombing Nazi targets and supporting ground troops over Germany, Italy, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and occupied Austria.

When Nazi armies surrendered in May 1945, Alan was assigned to the Occupational Air Command and used the opportunity to enroll in business courses offered by the Army and to tour historical and cultural sites in Italy, Palestine, Libya, Egypt, and Greece. On the way home in October 1945, he landed in Morocco, French West Africa (now Senegal), Brazil, Guyana, and Puerto Rico. Alan was proud of his service to the nation throughout his life.

After the war, Alan began a career in broadcasting and advertising. He was a radio announcer in Harlingen TX and then a sales representative in Chicago and Los Angeles before joining the Katz TV Advertising Agency. Alan rose through the ranks of the agency in St. Louis and Chicago before becoming a Vice President and the Manager of the Chicago Office in 1961. In 1972, he became Sales Manager and then Station Manager of WJTV in Jackson, MS.

Alan met Betty Wettstein at a YMCA dance in 1947. They married in December

1948 and enjoyed a loving partnership for 58 years, raising four children, Tom, Bob, Rick, and Linda. Upon retirement in 1986, Alan and Betty moved to Medford OR where they created a fulfilling life centered around their church, local theater and concerts, and numerous volunteer activities such as Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), Habitat for Humanity, the Lions Club, and the SMART reading program in local elementary schools. They travelled to over a dozen states, as well as Canada, Mexico, Norway and the United Kingdom. An avid reader, Alan never stopped learning and growing. Even into his 90s, new adventures included rafting on the Rogue and Colorado Rivers, climbing Chichen Itza pyramid in Mexico, or ice skating with his granddaughter.

Alan is survived by three children, Thomas Axtell (Jonna) of Henderson NV, Richard Axtell of Danville KY, and Linda Rudat of Seattle WA; a daughter-in-law, Ellen Axtell of Madison MS; six grandchildren, Andrea Axtell (Andrew Goodale), Sarah Axtell (Marko Blagojevic), Scott Rudat (Atalie), Laura Rudat Bettelheim (Julien), Ian Rudat (Lexi) and Kat Axtell Harrod (Dean), and eight great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his beloved wife of 58 years, Betty Wettstein Axtell and a son, Robert Axtell.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made to Court Appointed Special Advocates or the Lion's Eye Bank.