



## Oscar Joseph Piemme , Jr.

February 10, 1922 - May 27, 2016

Oscar Joseph Piemme, Jr., born February 10, 1922 in Mobile, Alabama, was the second of four children of Anna (Reynolds) and Oscar Joseph Piemme, Sr. Because his dad was a man with a restless spirit and a yearning to travel, the family moved around a lot, visiting all 48 states during their travels. They lived in the Puget Sound area of Washington State for several years until 1930, when his dad built a wooden bunkhouse on the back of their truck and headed for California. Oscar always claimed that he remembered when the family crossed the border from Oregon into Siskiyou County on their way south. Eventually the family settled again, homesteading acreage in the Sutter Buttes outside of Yuba City where he began to thrive in the rugged, remote life. The time spent in the "Buttes" was one of difficult, near subsistence level living which, for him, was full of boyhood adventures that sparked a love of the outdoors that never was extinguished. Many stories came from those homesteading days and were retold often. One in particular was how his dad would catch and keep boxfuls of live rattlesnakes to sell to the Chinese community in Yuba City. Later, relocation to Fresno in his early teens gave him access to the back country of the high Sierra and Yosemite, at that time still remote and undeveloped enough to be considered real wilderness. There he could camp and fish and explore almost without limitations. It was an experience he relished for the rest of his life. It also instilled such a love and respect for the wilderness that he could imagine nothing greater in life than making his living as a Forest Ranger.

Prior to his senior year of high school, the family moved once again, landing in Taft, Calif. where his dad set up a glass making and etching business. There Oscar worked as his assistant and learned the family's "special formula" for making fine glass. Upon graduation from Taft High School, and his father having abandoned the family for good, Oscar stayed on to help his mother keep the business going.

But managing a business eventually became too constrictive for a young man, so in May, 1942, he headed to Alaska with the U. S. Engineering Division where he spent a year working on a land surveying crew.

In 1943 he enlisted in the U. S. Marine Corps. For the next three years he served in the South Pacific and briefly in China with an artillery unit assigned to the 4th Division, attaining the rank of platoon sergeant. He was awarded the Purple Heart for a wound he received during the fighting on Okinawa. The way he told it, he was just quicker at ducking than the guy next to him when they heard in-coming enemy artillery fire. The guy next to him was killed.

After the war and taking advantage of the educational opportunity offered under the G. I. Bill, he enrolled at Cal-Berkeley, earning, as his brother Frank has said, "his civil engineering degree in just 3 years". It was during this time that he met another Cal-Berkeley student on a blind date set up by his roommate and best friend, "Red" Smith. Isabel Hart was a young elementary school teacher and rancher's daughter from Siskiyou County. Something clicked between them, their relationship bloomed, and in 1949 they were married in the Yreka Episcopal Church. There were times when it seemed that Oscar was amazed that it had happened. The story he loved to tell most often came from his and Isabel's courtship days when he and "Red" Smith came up from Cal during a vacation break to go fishing and, between the dense forest and deep mountain snow, managed to get themselves completely turned

around and lost. Backtracking, they ended up spending the night in one of the cabins located on the Hart ranch property, spoiling the fish they intended for supper when they cooked them in soap powder they mistook for flour. Hiking out the following morning, they arrived at the pick-up area in time to find the sheriff's posse unloading their horses and commencing a search party for the two city slicker college boys who had gotten themselves lost in the woods. He knew he hadn't made a good impression on his future father-in-law, or his future wife.

The couple continued living in the Bay area for several years, he working as an engineer for the City of San Francisco, until the birth of their second daughter. At that time, they moved back to Siskiyou County where he established his own civil engineering-land surveying business in Yreka. The business would remain in continuous operation for the next 50 years, surviving a devastating fire that destroyed the old Warrens Building in 1967, and which resulted in the loss of all equipment and most of the work just completed or in progress. Following the fire the firm relocated to Miner Street where it remained until closing in late 2004. During that time he served in the capacity of city engineer, working with such dedicated city leaders as Jim Dillon, O. J. LeBaron, and Roy Manley. As city engineer he was involved in diverse public works projects that ranged from the construction of Greenhorn dam to the Ringe city pool to the Fall Creek water project, all of which helped enhance the quality of life for the city. He was also active in local civic organizations, such as the Elks and the Rotary Club. While a member of the Rotarians he helped develop a program for bringing young students from Cal into local households for a long weekend each year. Thus, for several years the Piemme family hosted their own young foreign exchange students – all civil engineering majors, of course - from such countries as Egypt, Pakistan, and the Philippines. In 1971, the community, in recognition of his service, chose him Yreka's citizen of the year. Oscar was also a founding member of

the men's golf club at Shasta Valley Golf Course as well as one of the founders of the former Timberline Community Bank.

In 1972, he married Marian Williams. They had a long, devoted relationship that ended only with her death in 2014. During his retirement they traveled in their 5th wheeler throughout the Pacific Northwest and he was able to engage fully in two great passions of his life – fishing and golfing. He loved golf and continued to get out and play until a week prior to his death.

Oscar was a good family man. His was a stable, reliable presence and one that his children learned they could count on in a pinch or a problem. He always found time for camping and fishing trips in the summer and skiing jaunts to the old Mt Shasta Ski Bowl in the winter. His daughters, during their growing up years, always knew he would be in attendance at their numerous dance recitals, school plays, art shows or sporting events. He never forgot a birthday.

Oscar passed away peacefully at home, surrounded by his family, on May 27, 2016. He was preceded in death by his wives: Isabel, and Marian; his parents, his sister Aloysia “Alice”, and youngest brother Albert. He is survived by his daughters Pamela Isabel Piemme and Mary Ann Silva; his children by marriage: Mark Atwood and Lorie Williams; his younger brother Frank Piemme; his grandchildren Jasmine Silva, Genevieve, Ethan, and Jordan Eller, and Wade and Garret Atwood; and several great-grandchildren. Also his BCF (Best Canine Forever) - Cash.

Oscar loved Yreka and Siskiyou County, declaring many times throughout the years how lucky he was to have been able to live his life in such a great area. He loved his family. He loved the outdoors. And oh how he could dance! “Mac the Knife” will never be the same without him out there on the dance floor dancing it out.

There will be no services. A memorial golf tournament & barbecue is being planned for later this summer at Shasta Valley Golf Course. Memorial contributions can be made to Madrone Hospice, 255 Collier Circle, Yreka, CA., or The Dept. of Civil & Environmental Engineering, 760 Davis Hall, University of Calif., Berkeley, 94720-1740 ([www.ce.berkeley.edu](http://www.ce.berkeley.edu) - give to CEE).

# Tribute Wall



“ *Pam Piemme lit a candle in memory of Oscar Joseph Piemme , Jr.*



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**Pam Piemme** - June 11, 2016 at 04:15 PM



*Love, ya, Dad. Will miss you.*

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**Pam Piemme** - June 11, 2016 at 04:17 PM