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Newspaper of Record for the City of Fillmore

FILLMORE GAZETTE

Sunday, January 21st, 2018

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Obituary

Berthyl (Bert) Kimzey Bigham (1919-2017)

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“I never met a Man I didn’t like”

A quote by the famous Will Rodgers

Berthyl (Bert) Kimzey Bigham of Fillmore California age 97 passed away peacefully Tuesday April 4th, 2017. Bert a beloved local teacher lived in Fillmore 60 of his 97 years.

Bert was born 11/1/1919 in Pinckneyville, Illinois to the late Enos Bigham & Ruth (Hallbauer) Bigham.

He attended Pinckneyville H. S. graduating at age 16. As a baseball & football star his academic mind prepared him for the future.

This early graduation in 1935 required employment. He quickly found a job in his Father’s Bowling Alley working his way up the ladder to CEO of this prestigious family 3 lane bowling alley. The family suspects over the next three years he developed the life skills for success. Some of those skills included bartending, cigar smoking, poker & female companionship. After 3 busy years he took a break to become the Principle of the Demark School in Demark, Illinois with 17 students in 1938.

He went on to receive his BS in Education at Illinois Wesleyan University in Bloomington, Illinois.

His major Education. He minored in poker, cocktails, baseball, and sorority spiritual advisor.

In 1957 Bert moved the family from Pinckneyville to Fillmore, California. As Vice Principle & Student Councilor of Fillmore Jr. High he served his students for 25 years retiring in 1982. His 35 years of retirement are a testimony to his love of life. His love for students his legacy.

Bert served in the United States Coast Guard from June 1942 to November 1945. His duties included protecting the Gaviota Coast outside Santa Barbara up to Point Conception lighthouse. His daily regimen included catching saboteurs, training seals for the war effort & honing his marksmanship on the local Pelican & Seagull population as well as perfecting his suntan for camouflage purposes. He assured the family he was safe. Eventually shipped out he served in the “Battle of the Philippines Sea “. His war stories remain a family treasure.

Bert married his first wife Velma (Tanner) Bigham in Santa Barbara, Ca. early 1941. Divorced in the early 80’s he met & married Barbara (Lemley) Bigham on April 28th, 1984. She was the love of his life. As soul mates they spent 23 years camping their way from Oregon & Washington to Baja. Bert had many hobbies & a love for sports.

As the Champion of Dumpster Diving Ventura County he referred to his talent as “Surfing the Waste”. His unit dumpster located next to his mobile provided untold items crafted into art treasures to decorate inside & out of his mobile & admired by all.

Others hobbies included poker, tile rummy & washer board. Macramé, pottery & tomato plants his specialties. A voracious reader of Louis L’ Amour this cowboy had 114 books reading all multiple times.

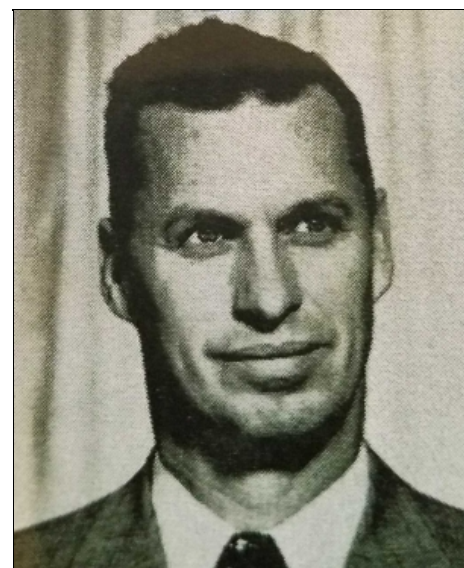
A star baseball player at Illinois Wesleyan University he went on to sign & play Class A ball for the NY Yankees minor league team in Grand Forks, North Dakota. A big Lakers & Dodger fan.

Proceeding Bert in death were siblings Ernie Bigham brother& Audrey (Smith) Bigham sister. Love of his life Barbara (Lemley) Bigham. John T Lemley of Mendocino, California.

Bert is survived by his two Son’s Robert & William both of California. Nephew Kim Bigham of Benton, Illinois. Matt Bigham & Jessica (Bigham) Phillips of Oak Park, Illinois. The Lemley Clan including step daughters Jackie Hooten, Kelly Black, Barbara Martin & sister in law Tad Vochchaster.

Bert left behind 12 Grand Children & 12 Great Children.

A heartfelt thank you to Pat Patterson & the Nursing staff providing care in Fillmore. The same to the wonderful Staff at Coastal View Healthcare Center in Ventura whose love of Bert & excellent care will forever be remembered by family & friends.



Berthyl (Bert) Kimzey Bigham (1919-2017)

In lieu of flowers Bert's requests we help the less fortunate by performing multiple acts of kindness.
A Celebration of Bert's life will be held on May 6th, Saturday, 2017.
The First Baptist Church at 1057 1st Street, Fillmore, California 93015 from 2 to 5 PM.

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