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ROBERT JOHN NEEBLING

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BOB NEEBLING March 26, 1932 ~ February 10, 2018

Robert John Neebling passed away at the age of 85, on February 10, 2018. Bob died with his loving wife, Clara, and numerous family members from across the country visiting him one last time. Bob was blessed to have lived a long, happy life, and he left us not too long after sinking a twisting 64-foot putt for eagle, with a large wager riding on the outcome. Or maybe not. Sports fans can't help but embellish the exploits of their heroes every now and then. Bob's family is no exception. But the first part - the long, happy life part - is certain fact. Bob's youthfulness - his love of athletics, his playfulness, his willingness to experience delight, his offbeat sense of humor - was a defining feature throughout his life. For all of Bob's accomplishments and adventures, for all the roles as family member and friend that he played so well, one of Bob's greatest achievements - if an achievement can be something that seemed effortless - was the way he held on to his sense of fun, excitement, and wonder in the world. Born to parents Frederick and Louise Neebling on March 26, 1932 in Jersey City, New Jersey, Bob grew up on the East Coast, graduating from New Jersey's Cranford High School in 1950. A top-rated baseball pitcher in the state, Bob was scouted by the Brooklyn Dodgers, St. Louis Cardinals, and others. He ultimately signed with the Detroit Tigers, swayed by the huge signing bonus the Tigers offered. If you define \$1,500 as huge. Bob enjoyed a measure of success in the minor leagues, but his baseball career was interrupted when he was drafted and then served in active combat during the Korean War. Bob returned from Korea to play for the Durham Bulls, the Tigers' affiliate in Augusta, Georgia. (Yes, THAT Bull Durham team made famous by Kevin Costner.) When arm and shoulder problems couldn't be fixed, he left professional baseball in 1955. From the East Coast Bob joined his parents and his siblings, Fred Jr. and Joyce, in Burlingame, California, taking college courses before beginning a 36-year career with PG&E. Bob moved to Red Bluff, California, in 1964, when he took a transfer with PG&E. Bob distinguished himself in his new community through athletics, playing Red Bluff Bluffer semi-pro baseball, PG&E fastpitch softball, senior slow-



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pitch softball, tennis, and finally, years of golf where his booming drives became the stuff of legend, or at least family legend. Watching a 68-year old man reach 300 yards might not be that big of a deal when you're only 35 yourself. But give it a few years and you'll see what a spectacular feat that truly is! After his first marriage ended and his children, Laura and Mark, left for college, Bob became captivated and hopelessly enchanted with ballroom dancing. Truth be told, Clara Padilla, who would soon become Clara Neebling, needed a dance partner and Bob was the lucky fellow roped into the escapade. Captivation and enchantment can sometimes be hard to source ... or maybe it can be crystal clear ... it was Clara, and not the dancing, that captivated and enchanted Bob. Bob married Clara on November 29, 1980, beginning a remarkable 37-year love affair that provided Bob with the happiest years of his long, happy life. That he became so close to Clara's children, Lisa, Gordi, Suzanne, and Andre, and their respective families, only added to the joy he experienced during his many years with Clara. Bob and Clara built their Red Bluff dream house overlooking the Sacramento River and, after retiring from their jobs with PG&E in 1993, took pleasure in traveling the world and enjoying their blended family. While the athlete in Bob certainly never retired, Clara and Bob frequently joined siblings and children to explore Europe, South America, Australia, New Zealand, Mexico, and Canada. Trips taken within the United States were numerous, constant, and nationwide, and trips to see their six children, six grandchildren, and five siblings and their families were often the reason. But when Bob was in town, many blissful days were spent playing a round of golf at his beloved Wilcox Oaks Golf Club. Bob is survived by his wife, Clara; children and stepchildren, Laura Neebling, Lisa Blair, Mark Neebling, Gordi Moeller, Suzanne Padilla, and Andre Padilla; grandchildren Georgia, Ben, Sydney, Shelby, Kyle, and Anthony; brother Fred and sister Joyce. While the many members of Bob's family will forever miss him dearly, we will do so secure and certain that his life was filled with happiness and was very well played. In lieu of flowers, Bob's family invites you to visit your own Field of Dreams. Pitch the bottom of the ninth in his honor, go for that backhand winner down the line on match point, or blast your driver over the dog leg on your final fairway. Bob enjoyed the game - playing it or watching it - and he'll be rooting for you from above.

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