



John "Boots" Gwosden

July 30, 1921 - February 03, 2017

John "Boots" Gwosden, age 95, passed away on Friday, February 3, 2017. Loving and attentive son of the late Steven and Mildred Gwosden (Obradovich) and the stepson of the late Joseph Obradovich. Born and raised in McKeesport, he was married for 72 years to Lillian Rezzarday Gwosden. Much loved father of Sandie McLaughlin and her husband Dr. Frank McLaughlin and the late Randy Gwosden and his wife Rebecca Banyasz Gwosden. He was the grandfather of Kelly Headrick (Adam), Daniel McLaughlin (Amy), Kerry Pringle (Michael), Brianna Shanty (Matthew), Brett Gwosden, and Matthew Bacco (Danielle). Great-grandfather "Bubba" to Bailey, Riley, Bryce and Macie McLaughlin, Kylie Pringle and Carson Bacco. He was an uncle to many nieces and nephews. Boots was the youngest surviving sibling of seven brothers and sisters many who lived into their 90's. As a young man, he was quite a good dancer. He was the tall, dark and handsome guy "lighting" up the dance floor at many local clubs including the Palisades in McKeesport where he met his wife, Lillian. The jitterbug was his specialty. In the 40's he played in the Pirate minor league organization as a second-baseman. He won the 1944 Pony League swat title playing for the Hornell Pirates with a .3383 average and was featured in the Louisville Slugger Yearbook. He was also featured in an article written by sportswriter, John Steadman for the Baltimore Sun Newspaper. Steadman related that Gwosden had all the qualities you look for in a prospect. He made all the plays, had excellent range, had a contagious spirit for the game and was a line drive hitter with power especially to right field. He was three years older than another second baseman that season, Nelson Fox, who was to play 19 years in the majors but at that point in their development, Steadman said that Gwosden was far superior! At seasons end, he was drafted into the Army. After that, he had an impressive start in the Eastern League in Albany but went home when the club refused to make payment on a bonus that had been promised in spring training. He quit, and walked out of baseball. He told Steadman that the bonus was just what he and his new wife needed to pay off their mortgage. Boots went on to work for the J & L Steel Company, Kelsey Hayes Wheel Company, National Tube Steel, and Equitable Insurance Company. He and his wife Lillian spent the last 45 years as owner/operators of the Traveler's Rest Motel in Fayette County. Boots was talented as a sports figure playing, managing and mentoring McKeesport baseball teams, winning many league championships. He also showed expertise in all aspects of homebuilding and mechanics. His family depended on him to help cut trees, use his tractor to dig water lines or footers, and to be their plumber, electrician, carpenter and mechanic. He was so eager to lend a hand to family, friends or anyone he felt needed his help. He was strong and kind and was definitely the Rock of the family. We all learned so much from him and depended on his support. We will pull his determined spirit into our hearts and will cherish all these years that the Lord gave him to us. Many thanks to his loving caregivers at The Grove in Irwin. Services will be private and are entrusted to Willig Funeral Home & Crematory. Condolences may be shared at www.willigfuneralcremationservices.com

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