
George J. Hefner

July 7, 2017 George Joseph Hefner passed away peacefully on July 7, 2017 at the age of 91. Originally from Sioux City, Iowa, George moved with his family to Southern California in 1929 initially settling in Atwater Village and later Glendale. George attended Loyola High School in Los Angeles and played second base for the Loyola Cubs. Just one day after his graduation in June of 1944, he enlisted in the Navy. Three months later, he arrived in Pearl Harbor and on September 16, 1944, he boarded the newly refurbished USS West Virginia. Severely attacked and sunk at Pearl Harbor, the West Virginia returned to the Pacific War at the start of the Philippine invasion. On board the 'WeeVee' as an Electricians mate 3rd class, George experienced some of the more memorable battles and moments of the Pacific War including the Battles of Leyte Gulf in the Philippines, as well as Mindoro, Lingayen, Okinawa, Salami Wan and many more. He witnessed the Marine flag raising on Mount Suribachi at Iwo Jima. On October 25, 1944, as the lead battleship during The Last Battle of Battleships in Surigao Straits, the West Virginia took 8 direct hits during the first salvo. The USS West Virginia proudly led the fleet into Tokyo Bay where George and his crew mates witnessed the Japanese surrender. Following his discharge from the Navy in June of 1946, George took advantage of the GI Bill and enrolled at the University of Southern California. It was at USC where he reconnected with lifelong neighborhood friend Rod Dedeaux, who had recently taken over the head coaching duties for the Trojan Baseball team. With an offer to play baseball, as well as get a college degree, George was the second baseman for the Trojan Baseball team all 4 of his years at USC. This 1948 Trojan team won their first National College Championship defeating a Yale team that included the future President George H. W. Bush. After the national championship, George was signed to a contract with the Pittsburgh Pirates as an infielder by Wesley "Branch" Rickey with a \$5000 signing bonus! He married Jeanne L. Viau (the daughter of longtime family friends) in 1950. They enjoyed 63 years of marriage, until her passing in 2014. George and "The Tiger" raised 6 children in Glendale. Following his short-lived pro baseball career, George, a frustrated G-Man, joined the FBI. The day before he was to report to Quantico, VA for training, he visited a high school friend, a stock broker with Hill Richards & Co., who persuaded George to cancel his appointment with the FBI and join his investment firm. Thus launched George's stellar 57 year career in the financial industry. During his career, George was affiliated with Bateman Eichler, Hill Richards, Prudential Bache, PaineWebber, and Great Western Financial Services. He was honest and hard-working and always put his clients' needs first. An avid golfer and sports fan, George was a member of Oakmont Country Club in Glendale for over 60 years. He was a lifetime member of Cardinal and Gold as a supporter of Trojans Athletics, and a season ticket holder for the Los Angeles Dodgers and Lakers. George will be missed by his family, leaving behind his children: Susan Cerini, Christine Hefner, Janet Rasch, Michael Hefner, James Hefner, John Hefner and their spouses; 13 grandchildren and 6 great grandchildren. May he rest in everlasting peace and know that he was loved. A memorial service will be held at Our Savior Parish on the USC Campus on Monday, July 31st at 11:00 a.m. In lieu of flowers, please remember George with a donation to Operation Homefront (operationhomefront.org) or the USC Trojan Marching Band. Cabot & Sons, Pasadena.

Published in the Los Angeles Times on July 27, 2017
