



Rolland "Bart" Burdette Bartholomew

April 8, 1921 - May 1, 2016

Rolland Burdette "Bart" Bartholomew, of Salisbury, NC passed away Sunday, May 1, 2016 at Liberty Lane Hospice House, WG Hefner VA Medical Center. 1921 was a very good year. On April 8 of that year Rolland Burdette Bartholomew was born in the small community of Lebanon, Nebraska. Little Burdette, as he was called then, was the son of the William Sylvester, the only doctor in town and his wife Beatrice Whited. The youngest of four siblings, Little Burdette had a sister Lois and two brothers Arthur and Kent. He was the surprise of the family, arriving eight years after the next youngest Kent. While unexpected his arrival became a blessing to all of those who knew him. 1921 was a very good year.

Little Burdette grew up in Lebanon, population about 250. His mother was the homemaker to the family and the nurse for her husband. His youth was filled with the activities of children growing up in any small town- playing in the dirt, lying on his back making up stories while watching the clouds pass overhead, playing sports with the other children and eventually becoming a soda jerk at the ice cream parlor as a high school student.

Little Burdette, also called Doc, got along well with everyone in the Lebanon community. Portending things to come he even got along well with his teachers. Graduating third in his high school class of 11, he received a \$10.00 scholarship from the local technical college. In one of those many youthful decisions we all make Burdette declined the scholarship and instead entered Kearny State Normal, making "C" grades across the board.

During the summer of his 18th year Burdette had the first of many great adventures in his life. With mixed emotions he walked out the front door of his home in Nebraska to the car waiting to take him to Reno, Nevada. He set off with just a few dollars in his pocket and a promise from his brother Kent that if he came to Yosemite he would have a job all summer. He spent the summer with Kent working in the park and hiking the Sierras. While exploring the area near the top of Yosemite Falls Kent slipped and almost fell over. Luckily Burdette was there to pull him back. At the end of the summer Burdette and Kent purchased a 1931 Indian motorcycle and rode it from California back home to Nebraska.

The fateful summer in Yosemite was a major turning point in Burdette's life. The California experiences led him to choose the University of California at Berkeley over the small school in Kearny. He moved to Berkeley to live with his brother, fully participating in the active college life on campus. At Berkeley Burdette met his future wife, Jane Herrington. His stay in Berkeley was overshadowed by the ever widening war in Europe and the Pacific.

By now Little Burdette had become Bart Bartholomew, a name he would retain for the rest of his life. Drawn to adventure, Bart joined a survey crew laying the path for the Alcan Highway connecting the northern United States to Alaska. While blazing a path through the wilderness was a meaningful experience he regretted not taking full advantage of some of the opportunities offered by the Yukon- gold panning, fishing and studying geology. It was, however, a pivotal period in his life. As they moved ahead with the survey he tried to convince a friend to become a teacher. Instead he convinced himself to teach and to work with young kids. The Canadian wilderness saw the birth of a consummate teacher, a teacher who would touch the lives of thousands over the years. By now World War II had engulfed the planet. Bart volunteered to serve in the US Army Engineers. The Army introduced him to what would become one of his great passions in life, photography. During his three years of service he was stationed in Santa Rosa, CA (where he married Jane), Geiger Field in Spokane, WA for training and then deployed to Okinawa and Korea. One of

his friends took a picture of Bart developing film on a hot, sandy beach in Okinawa, no mean feat as those who have developed their own film can attest.

After discharge Bart returned home to his wife. Bart and Jane began family life in Boulder, Colorado. He graduated from the University of Colorado, earning degrees in Education and Geology. His long teaching career began at Boulder High School where he spent four years before moving to Palo Alto, CA. After 15 years teaching in the Palo Alto high schools he decided to be a teacher of teachers. Three years at the University of Maryland led to a doctorate in education followed by 13 years as a professor of education at the University of Texas in Austin, TX. Bart taught physics, earth science and photography to thousands of high school students and eventually trained another generation of teachers to continue the work.

Bart the teacher was also Bart the husband and father. Three children joined the family over those years- Bruce, Mark and Mary Jane. With children came new responsibilities, new adventures and new opportunities to teach. Bart wrote the Ready Fox stories to entertain and share life lessons. He would point out cloud types and rock formations during long drives across the country. Most childhood experiences came with a lesson from dad.

As a high school teacher Bart had most summers free. Rather than remaining in Palo Alto he chose to find temporary jobs in far more interesting locales. The family spent memorable summers at Boy Scout camp, where dad managed the rifle range; Duluth, MN, including the famous canoe trip in the back country; and Boulder, CO where Bart contributed to the writing of a new Earth Science curriculum, a curriculum still used many years after he left the teaching profession. During one Colorado summer Bart found a 1931 Model A Ford sitting in a farmers field. He bought it on the spot, towed it back to California and spent many happy hours doing restoration work.

Retirement brought Bart from Austin back to Lake Tahoe to live in the Sierras so treasured by Jane. Son Mark and his wife Stephanie helped him find a

small house in the woods. The kids were grown and Bart entered a new phase of life. Ever the teacher he gave lectures and taught classes for Elder Hostel. On his own and with Jane he took several long trips including Australia, New Zealand, China, Hong Kong, Europe, South America, Sri Lanka and road trips across much of the western United States. Bart and Jane had eight wonderful retirement years together before she passed on. Those years saw the continuation of old hobbies and the growth of new ones. Bart had always been an active photographer, dating from his years of military service. He taught photography in high school, took portraits of the family and recorded the many family trips. He played golf frequently, having many enjoyable rounds with friends and the children when they came for a visit. In Austin he picked up gem faceting and cut many beautiful stones during the years in Tahoe. As his eyesight declined he switched to making cabochons and then silver work. Later in life he drew upon his long standing interest in western novels and authored the Billy Marshall series of books.

From childhood Bart had always been a sociable creature. He made friends easily and was well loved wherever he lived. Sometime after Jane's passing he was fortunate to find a new life partner, Bette Camp. The two fell in love and were married, starting a new chapter in his life. Bart and Bette lived in Tahoe and Reno for a few years before moving to Salisbury, NC. They took up residence in a home on the property of Steve and Mary Jo Simpson, Bette's son-in-law and daughter. The last years of his life were spent playing golf and participating in the social and civic life of Salisbury. Bart was famous for being the best fruit cake salesman at Civitan. He continued playing golf with other seniors in the community. In later years Bart and Bette moved into a retirement community where Bart continued to bring joy to those around him. At breakfast he would spend a moment to personally greet all of the residents and offer a song or a joke to get their day off to a good start. Always the teacher Bart would organize groups to view and discuss videos on a wide range of topics from science to world affairs. Bart was proud of his accomplishments, sincere in his faith and willing to share his talents with

others. What a wonderful life and heritage to leave for those that knew him. Bart may have been the surprise of the family, but he was welcomed into a warm, loving family. Throughout his life he returned that love many fold, bringing joy and comfort to family and friends. Everyone felt a little bit better leaving his company. What more could anyone ask of life?

Memorial service will be held 11AM Wednesday, May 4, 2016 at Oak Park Retirement Community.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to WG Hefner VA Medical Center Hospice, Building 43, 1601 Brenner Ave., Salisbury, NC 28144-2515.

Summersett Funeral Home is serving the Bartholomew family. Online condolences may be made at www.summersettfuneralhome.com.

Previous Events

Memorial Service

MAY 4. 11:00 AM (ET)

Oak Park Retirement Center Chapel
548 White Oaks Drive
Salisbury, NC 28147

Tribute Wall

CH

“ *When reading his obituary, with a heavy and full heart, I could hear his voice reading it aloud, like one of his Reddy Fox stories. In one short piece of my life, I knew him as Grandpa Bart and wonderful friend. He was such a loving, full of life, full of smiles, full of humor, story teller and gift to the world. He was one of those people that you wished he would live forever so that your kids and grandkids could meet him and listen to his stories all day long.*



My prayers go out to the family. He will forever be missed.

Christina, from Tucson, Az

Christina - May 20, 2016 at 12:33 AM

PC

“ *My prayers and thoughts are with the family.*

Pat Carson - May 04, 2016 at 10:06 AM

MS

Thank you, Pat. We have been feeling the prayers. He will be missed.

Mary Jo Simpson - May 17, 2016 at 03:42 PM

HA

“ I feel so honored to have known Me. Bart-always a warm smile, a hug and a twinkle in his eye. Bette and Bart made the sweetest couple, complimenting each other. I have fond memories of discussions and I'll treasure the silver cross I have that he made. Although I can't be at the funeral tomorrow I'll be wearing the cross in his memory and be holding all of you in my prayers. Truly a life well lived!

Heather St Aubin-Stout - May 03, 2016 at 08:55 PM

MS

Oh Heather. Thank you for the sweet reminder of his silver cross. He loved making them. It was truly a symbol of what he believed. And I think those beliefs lead to the 'twinkle in his eye'.

Mary Jo Simpson - May 17, 2016 at 03:45 PM

PP

“ When he turned 90, Bart stood up at the Salisbury Civitan Club and announced, "This is what 90 looks like." Ever the teacher and ever the humorist, Bart could be counted on to add something outlandish to his outfit on special occasions - a bright green scarf on St. Patty's Day, a huge bow tie for a 1920s party, a crown of tinsel at Christmas. In the summary of his life in today's paper, the writer (probably Bart himself) said, "Everyone felt a little better leaving his company. What more could anyone ask of life?" That is the only time I ever read a question of any kind in an obituary. Rhetorical questions don't require an answer, but provide a moment to ponder the sentiment behind the question. Thank you, Bart for reminding us of your influence on our lives.

Pete Prunkl - May 03, 2016 at 07:52 AM

MS

Pete, you couldn't have described Dad better. The best teachers provide that 'moment to ponder'...and Bart was one of the best! You are right. He did write his own story quite a while ago, and asked for it to be his obituary. We are glad, too, because we couldn't have done him justice. As one of the most positive voices in our heads, he will be teaching us, and asking those questions, for generations. Thank you for your kind memories.

Mary Jo Simpson - May 17, 2016 at 03:51 PM