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## James William Kerns



James William Kerns passed away on March 26, 2010, at Quail Hollow Memory Care in Richland, Wash. He was born in Janesville, Minn., on April 5, 1916.

He lived in Klamath Falls, Ore., from age 2 until 2008, when he moved to Richland.

After graduating from Oregon State University with a major in agricultural engineering in 1938, he joined the family farm implement business.

He married his college sweetheart Dorothy Cook in 1939.

He was called to duty by the U.S. Army in 1943 and sent to fight through northern Europe during World War II.

He was a combat engineer and a member of the 42nd Infantry Rainbow Division. He was selected to be a radio operator because he had an ear for tones and the Morse Code came easily. After the loss of half of his division,

he yearned to go home, but the worst was yet to come. On April 29, 1945, the Rainbow Division liberated the Dachau Concentration Camp.

After returning from the war, Jim continued in the family business, supplying the Klamath Basin with farm implements, irrigation and appliances. The business grew and diversified, finally specializing in agricultural irrigation.

He served as president of the Klamath County Chamber of Commerce in 1951. He was named Agri-Businessman of the Year in 1985. He became a member of The Salvation Army advisory board in 1948 and was a life member. He served on the Selective Service Board for 20 years. He was a member of the Klamath County Planning Commission and served for a time as its chairman. He became a member of the Roads Advisory Committee in 1962 and served as chairman in 1985.

He was previously a director for the Associated Oregon Industries and the Klamath Housing Authority. He has been a member of the Farm Bureau, the Grange, and the Lions and Kiwanis clubs. He was selected to be on the Diamond Pioneer Agricultural Achievement Registry at Oregon State University in 2003. This registry recognizes colleagues who have made significant contributions to agriculture and related areas throughout their careers.

Having been the stroke of the Beaver Crew at Oregon State University, he always wanted to share his joy of rowing with others. He felt Lake Ewauna was perfect for rowing with its size and its protected location. In 1970, he established the Lake Ewauna Rowing Club. This gave the opportunity to compete in sports to many high school students from the Klamath Basin who might not have had the opportunity in traditional high school sports.

Lake Ewauna Rowing Club had competitive success in the 1970s. Some of its accomplishments included becoming West Coast Champions once and achieving a silver medal twice. In 1977, a Lake Ewauna Rowing Club junior four traveled to Camden, N.J., and won a silver medal in the Junior National Championships. Jim also had a crew at Oregon Institute of Technology, which sent a pair to Syracuse, N.Y., to row in the Intercollegiate Rowing Association Championships in 1980. They brought home a bronze medal. In 2003, the crewhouse in Veterans Memorial Park was built, bearing his name.

Jim spent most of his time monitoring the water in the Klamath Basin and a good share of it fighting to keep water in Upper Klamath Lake. In 1952, he was appointed by Gov. Paul Patterson to the Oregon Klamath River Commission, which worked with a similar commission in California to create the Klamath River Compact Commission. Jim was the youngest member of the original board. In 1956, President Dwight Eisenhower signed legislation establishing the Klamath River Compact Commission. The commission then wrote the Klamath River Compact, which would prioritize the use of the waters of the Upper Klamath Basin, putting agriculture second only to domestic use. The compact was to guarantee the agriculture economy of the Klamath Basin. In 1972, Jim became chairman of the Off-Stream Storage Committee and worked tirelessly promoting deep-water storage. He became very frustrated regarding all the money spent doing studies on the Upper Klamath Lake.

Jim said, "Another study will add about another inch to the pile of federal studies in my garage, and that's all it will do." Jim felt Boundary Dam should be built in the Clear Lake Drainage and he would have liked to see storage built at Aspen Lake. Until a few years ago, he could tell you how many thousands of acre-feet of water went down the Link River in any year since 1906, water he believed was wasted. Jim maintained, "We are going to need all the water we can get someday; every bit of it. We can't save it now. It goes down river wasted; we have to have more storage."

In 1991, Jim founded the Klamath Basin Water Users Advisory Committee, which was commissioned by the Klamath County Commissioners and was the first all-inclusive water group in the Basin. Membership included representation from Klamath, Modoc and Siskiyou counties (states of Oregon and California), Native Americans, rafters, boaters, farmers, fishing and environmental groups, and the power company.

Jim had an amazing wit and he had a quip for everything. He was an avid golfer and became a life member of Reames Golf & Country Club. He served as president of Reames in 1959. Lake of the Woods was a big part of his life and was where he built a cabin in 1950. He loved hunting, fishing and hiking, mostly for the time this allowed him to spend with his friends. He played the saxophone most of his life, including being in the pep band at Oregon State University.

Jim retired in 2002.

He was a leader in changing the irrigation practices in the Klamath Basin. He was a quiet, gentle man and generous to a fault. He was a visionary. He will be greatly missed.

Jim's first wife, Dorothy, and his two brothers, John and Ben, preceded him in death.

He is survived by his second wife, Janice; three daughters, Betty Maryott and her husband, Jim, Janet Kerns, and Judy Brosterhous; four grandchildren, Annie Richards, Mindy Johnson and her husband, Mike, Ginger Painter and her husband, Darin, and Eric Brosterhous; four great-grandchildren, Meghan Johnson, Gavin Johnson, Andrew Painter and Braeden Painter; step-great-grandchildren, Amber and Jennie Richards; sisters-in-law, Jeanette Kerns and Glee Kerns; and eight nieces and nephews.

The family wishes to thank all who provided such wonderful care for our father during these trying times.

A gathering of family and friends will be held at the Jim Kerns Crewhouse in Klamath Falls at noon April 24, 2010.

The family suggests donations be made to the Lake Ewauna Rowing Club, 10 George Nurse Way, Klamath Falls, OR 97601;

Lower Valley Hospice, 3920 Outlook Road, Sunnyside, WA 98944; Kadlec Medical Center, 888 Swift Blvd., Richland, WA 99354; or the charity of your choice.

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