

Obituaries

Charles "Chuck" Nelke

SALEM - Charles Patrick Nelke
March 17, 1928 – January 3, 2018

Charles (Chuck) was born to Agnes and Nicholas Nelke in Fort Smith, Arkansas. In 1937, he moved with his family to Stayton, Oregon and then to West Salem. From 1945, the family operated "The Farm" an over 200-acre dairy, later adding sheep. Chuck attended Sacred Heart Academy, where he met the love of his life, Lorraine Bickler. Following high school graduation in 1946, Chuck joined the Navy for two years, where he served in Camp Pendleton and traveled to Hawaii, the Far East, including Shanghai. Upon his return from service in 1948, he and Lorraine were married, on October 9, 1948, at St. Vincent de Paul Church in Salem.

Chuck and Lorraine lived in several residences before settling in a house on Wallace Road, where Chuck, a self-taught carpenter, electrician and plumber, made the house their first home, expanding it to fit his growing family. In 1959, after welcoming their fifth child, the family moved to the house on Center Street. They lived in this home nearly sixty years, raising farm animals and then later blackberries on their acreage. The home is known to this day as the "Grand Hotel" for all the family gatherings and visitors from near and far.

Chuck joined his father, Nick, to work at Elstrom Floor Covering in 1948, moving in 1950 to Capitol Floor until 1972. Later, he worked at Canyon Floors in Beaverton, then successfully managed his own business as an independent floor and counter contractor until his retirement. Throughout his career, he developed many life-long friendships.



Chuck enjoyed hunting and fishing with his brother Ray and his sons, which became an annual tradition until a few years ago. This led to a greater love of travel, spanning decades of camping trips with the family, which evolved to annual trips for he and Lorraine to see their grown children, throughout California, Arizona, and even a cruise trip to Alaska. They also enjoyed many happy years of square dancing with the "Happy Wanderers," and their many friends at the "donut shop" where Chuck continued to "meet up" to get his daily dose of gossip and sage advice, right up to the day he went into the hospital.

Chuck and Lorraine were married for 66 years until Lorraine died in 2014. They were devout Catholics and members of St. Joseph's parish for over 60 years.

Chuck is survived by his children: Elaine (Joe) Swyt of Wilsonville, Oregon; Jodie (Mick) Rogers of Bunbury, Western Australia; Doug (Bridget) Nelke of Sun City, Arizona; Terry (Kris) Nelke of Salem, Oregon; Denise Nelke of Litchfield Park, Arizona; Janine (Matthew) Prior of Carlsbad, California and brother, Ray (Sally) Nelke of Portland, Oregon; sisters, Marie (Bill) Trumm of Canby, Oregon; Betty Mitchell of Salem, Oregon and Deanna Daschel of Portland, Oregon. He is also survived by nine grandchildren, eighteen great-grandchildren, and one great-great grandchild. He is predeceased by his wife Lorraine and his son, Michael; his parents, Nick and Agnes Nelke; brothers Joe, Bill and David.

There will be a rosary prayer service on Wednesday, January 10 that 9:30 a.m., followed by a memorial Mass at 10:00 a.m. at St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Salem. A reception follows in the parish hall. Family are invited to graveside prayers at Calvary Cemetery in Mt. Angel, following the reception.

The family would like to express their sincere appreciation to the ICU medical staff at Salem Hospital, for their support in Chuck's final days. In lieu of flowers, the Nelke family suggests donations to St. Joseph's Catholic School. Assisting the family is Virgil T. Golden Funeral Service.