

ROGER VALDEMAR KUOPPALA, 86



Roger Valdemar Kuoppala was born on December 15, 1928 in Yankton, South Dakota and died at the age of 86 on August 6, 2015 in Los Angeles, California. His mother Jena (Larson) Kuoppala was from Sweden and his father Leonard Kuoppala was from Finland. They came to America in search of a life full of opportunities. His father had to work in the mines since his farm was not profitable enough at the time. His father later died in a mining accident which put his mother into a severe shock. How could she raise her 7 boys and 1 girl alone? The local Finnish Lutheran Church pastor asked the congregation to step up and take the children to their homes to raise. Many local families accepted all of the Kuoppala children into their homes. Roger grew up on the Tuovinen family ranch in the Black Hills area. He had

many great times and adventures. He once rescued a barn owl and named him Ole. The owl became his favorite pet and they remained together throughout his childhood. The owl was never in a cage. He was free to roam and always returned to Roger each morning. He also worked with rattlesnake exterminator A.M. Jackley locating snake dens throughout South Dakota.

Roger was a real cowboy riding horses out on the range and bull riding in the local rodeo. After graduating from Buffalo High School he completed one year of college before enlisting in the Navy. He served during the Korean War, stationed on Whidbey Island, Washington where he served as a fireman, cook as well as research assistant on the USS Norton Sound, a missile research and development ship. While stationed at Point Hueneme Naval Base in California, he and a buddy traveled to Ojai, California where he met the one and only true love of his life, Lorna May Nichols whom he married while still serving in the Navy.

After his honorable discharge from the Navy he worked as a fireman for Lockheed Martin Aeronautical Systems Company in Burbank, California. Roger later moved with his wife and two young daughters to Santa Barbara, California buying a house on the GI bill. Roger worked as a body and fender man at Washburn Chevrolet in Santa Barbara. He was also a golf enthusiast often playing the whole course before work each morning. He became an exceptionally good golfer with a handicap similar to the professionals at that time. After work he would return home for dinner and take the family to the YMCA for swimming while he would go to the sauna. Roger was very athletic and would water ski at Lake Nacimiento on the weekends with his family and friends. He was an excellent swimmer, enjoyed playing tennis, soft ball, basketball and volleyball. Roger's wife Lorna died of breast cancer at only 33 years of age, devastating the family. Lorna was the most loving, generous and caring woman he had ever known.

Roger married two more times after moving to Southern California where he also enjoyed square dancing and was a member of the Scandinavian Club. After his third wife's death he moved back to Santa Barbara County where he was again able to participate in a lot of fun activities he once enjoyed with Lorna. He had a very active life going to parades, concerts, movies, plays, a military ball, the beach, mountains and a few trips to a local golf course driving range. His favorite thing to do was to sit in his daughter's back yard, enjoying the peace and quiet while watching a few birds as they fluttered back and forth in the yard. He also enjoyed riding in the car while taking day trips to Carpinteria, Santa Barbara, Solvang, Santa Maria and Guadalupe. Roger had a beautiful smile and a friendly demeanor. He was the best listener you could ever want. His family takes peace in knowing that Roger became a Christian and is now in heaven with his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

He was preceded in death by his parents, foster parents, six brothers, Henry, Eino, Gunnard, Sigurd, Swanie and Wayne and his foster sister Edna. He is survived by his beloved sister Nancy, his two daughters Jane and Ellen as well as four grandchildren and five great grandchildren.