



Earl Clifford Olofson

January 31, 1914 - February 5, 2015

Earl Clifford Olofson, age 101, passed away peacefully on February 5, 2015, at Friendship Village in Columbus, Ohio. He is survived by his daughters, Carol O'Shea and Susan Olofson, and his sons, Carl and Jon Olofson, as well as his grandchildren Casey O'Shea, Cassie O'Shea (Zaviezo), Julie Petersen, and Sarah, Erika, and Jackie Olofson, as well as great-grandchildren Aubrie Petersen and Fianna O'Shea. He has joined his beloved wife Alma in Paradise.

"Cliff" (as he was known) was born to Esther Nelson Olofson and Carl Frithiof Emanuel Olofson on January 31, 1914, in Brooklyn, New York, the second of two children. He was raised in West Orange, New Jersey, where he graduated from West Orange High School. He continued on to Blair Academy and Lehigh University from which he graduated in 1936, with a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering. He worked for IBM as a field service engineer and design engineer until 1942, when he entered the United States Navy to serve in the Second World War.

During the war, Cliff worked with a small team of officers on a top-secret project to break enemy codes using electro-mechanical code breaking technology developed by a British team led by Alan Turing (and made famous in the recently-released movie *The Imitation Game*). His work remained classified for 29 years after the war, and he was always reluctant to discuss it,

even after that.

While serving in Washington, DC, Cliff met and married Alma Huber, a nurse at Johns Hopkins Hospital, in 1945. Soon after, they had their first child, Carol. Cliff served in the Navy until March of 1946, and left with the rank of lieutenant. After the war, Cliff returned to IBM for six months, until he was persuaded by his former Navy mates to join a firm that would further develop the code-breaking technology for the Navy. That firm, called Engineering Research Associates (ERA) took over a former Navy facility in St. Paul, Minnesota, so Cliff moved his young family there in 1946. In the following year, Cliff and Alma had their second child, Susan.

In 1949, Cliff joined several of his colleagues in moving on to Remington Rand, where he worked on Univac technology. This change prompted Cliff to move once again, this time to Westport, Connecticut. There, he designed computer card readers and sorters, among other equipment. Cliff and Alma had their third child, Carl, in 1954. In 1958 Cliff and the family moved to Simsbury, Connecticut, where Cliff worked at Royal McBee, then Underwood. They welcomed their fourth child, Jon, in 1959. In 1961, they moved to Centerville, Ohio, as Cliff joined Standard Register to help them develop and modernize business information technology for the 1960s. During this time, Cliff also pursued post-graduate studies at the Ohio State University.

Subsequent job changes took the family to Penfield and Fairport, New York, and Westford, Massachusetts. Cliff retired in 1976, at age 62. With three children out on their own and the fourth, Jon, attending high school, they settled in north Columbus (near Worthington), Ohio. Cliff and Alma attended the Worthington Presbyterian Church from that time until physical infirmity prevented their direct participation in services. They moved to Friendship Village, a retirement community in northeast Columbus, in 1994. Alma passed away in 2009.

Cliff was an artist with a natural facility for sketch art, his favorite media being pencil and colored pencil or charcoal on paper. He was also an accomplished drummer, who played in the high school band and orchestra. He also participated in high school and college theatricals. He loved to sing and sang in various church choirs. Proud of his Swedish heritage, he passed along to his children a love of Swedish Christmas customs, including herring and knäckebröd, Dala hästar (Swedish carved horses), and glögg (a festive Swedish Christmas hot punch). His mind was always inquisitive and he was a natural problem solver. In his later years, while at Friendship Village, he produced a sketch that eventually formed the basis for the design of their new assisted living facility, Ridgewood, in which he finally lived. An eternal optimist, Cliff always looked for the good in everyone.

Cliff's ashes will be interred, together with Alma's, in the Santa Fe National Cemetery in Santa Fe, New Mexico, in a private family service. In lieu of flowers, donations to the American Macular Degeneration Foundation (www.macular.org) are encouraged.

Tribute Wall



“ *Earl Clifford Olofson*

January 28, 2023 at 10:24 AM