

# Deseret News

## Obituary: Robert Leroy Chambers

Published: Tuesday, Oct. 30 2007 11:41 a.m. MDT

### Robert Leroy Chambers

1918 ~ 2007

SARATOGA, CA - Bob Chambers, 89, died peacefully in his home at the Saratoga Retirement Community October 24, 2007. An advertising slogan for his first company, "My daddy can do anything, he has a Shopsmith!", captures the determination, creativity, and self-reliance of this enthusiastic entrepreneur.

Bob was born September 9, 1918 in Salt Lake City, UT the second son of George Brower Chambers and Vilate Ellen Schofield. His father tragically died in a drowning accident just before Bob's second birthday, but a few years later his mother married Dr. Henry Raile who raised the boys as his own. Henry and Vilate added a daughter, Ramona, to the family. Bob's delight in the precise use of language led him initially into journalism. As a student at East High School in Salt Lake City, he was the editor of the "Red and Black." He won awards for his writing at the National Institute for High School Journalists at Northwestern University, and at the University of Utah he wrote the "Who's News" publication and for three years edited the "Utah Alumnus" magazine. Also an

outstanding student, Bob was awarded memberships in the Owl and Key National Honor Society and the Phi Kappa Phi Scholastic Honorary Society. Somehow Bob also managed to serve as a Homecoming Chairman, and while on the Junior Prom Committee he met the enchanting Leah June Musser, also of Salt Lake City. They became engaged Christmas Eve, 1938.

After graduating with a BA in Political Science in 1939, Bob started his first company, the Collegiate Guide Service, hiring college

students as local tour guides. After a year at the Fletcher School of International Law and Diplomacy (Tufts University) in Medford, MA, writing to June every day he was gone. Bob received his MA in 1940 and he and June were married that summer at "The Little Church Around the Corner" in New York City. They made their first home in Cambridge, MA while Bob completed his MBA at Harvard University where he was elected a George F. Baker Scholar, the school's top academic honor.

During World War II, Bob and June lived in San Francisco where June worked for the Navy and Bob handled cost accounting at the Kaiser Shipyards across the Bay. After the war, Bob helped Stanley Hiller, Jr. develop Hiller Helicopters before moving on in 1947 to found his own company, Magna Power Tool Corporation, with his brother, Frank Chambers. Using a design by Hans Goldschmidt, Magna produced the first multipurpose home power tool, the Shopsmith, which is still being manufactured today.

In 1953, Bob was named a member of President Eisenhower's Committee on Government Contracts, formed to ensure federal procurement contract compliance with nondiscrimination requirements.

After selling Magna, in 1959 Bob founded Bartlett-Snow-Pacific, Inc., a conglomerate of engineering equipment companies. And in 1969 Bob created Envirotech Corporation, which grew to be the largest manufacturer of water and air pollution control equipment in the U.S. and of underground tunneling and mining loaders in the world, and a Fortune 500 company. Over the years, Bob also served as a director on numerous boards, including those of Consolidated Freightways, Inc., The Herrick Corporation, Memorex Corporation, and Varian Associates, Inc. Retiring from Envirotech, Bob and Robert C. Wilson formed Wilson & Chambers, Inc., a venture capital firm, in 1983, through which he was able to encourage a new generation of entrepreneurs with his personal philosophy, "You have to think big right from the start, no matter how scared you are."

That philosophy carried over into his early participation in the Young Presidents' Organization, serving in five national offices including the presidency in 1957, into his founding directorship of the Children's Health Council of the Mid-Peninsula, in Palo Alto, CA, and into his service on the University of Utah's National Advisory Council.

It was also reflected in the joy with which Bob and June embraced opportunities in their lives. They were married 64 years, until June's death in 2004. During that time they traveled all over the world and to every continent. They built four houses together, three in the Bay Area and one at Lake Tahoe that was always open to friends and family and where Bob skied at Alpine Meadows. They welcomed rough seas on their many voyages, including a typhoon in the South Pacific and towering waves while rounding Cape Horn. And they danced together blissfully, from their Salt Air days in college to Menlo Country Club's Thursday evenings, where the band would begin to play "New York, New York" as they entered the room.

They were spectacular parents to their three children, and thoughtful and generous in the love and encouragement and fun that they shared with in-laws, grandchildren, siblings, nieces and nephews, co-workers, and friends, all of whom they valued highly.

Although there is happiness that Bob is at last reunited with his June, his presence is deeply missed by his three children, Pamela C. Champe of Montgomery, WV, Penelope C. Percy of Seattle, WA, and James H. Chambers of Dallas, TX; five grandchildren, (who called him "Grand-bob,"), Mark A. Champe, Peter S. Champe, R. Cameron Percy, Robert M. Chambers, and Katharine E. Chambers; great-grandson, Alex-ander Gilliland and great-grand-daughter, Uma Champe; adopted daughter,

Jane Tom of Berkeley, CA, and her children Simon, Jean, Julia, Joan, and Sean Tom; 33 surviving nieces and nephews; and countless friends. All who loved Bob are especially grateful to Donna Verna of Los Altos, CA, and Sam Lee of Sacramento, CA, who made such an enormous contribution to his happiness, health, and well-being in his last years. A visitation with the family will be held at Spangler Mortuary, 650 Live Oak Avenue, Menlo Park, CA 94025, Monday, October 29, 2007, from 12-2 p.m. Interment will be at the Nephi City Cemetery, 400 East 400 North, Nephi, UT 84648. In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made in Bob's name to The Children's Health Council, 650 Clark Way, Palo Alto, CA 94304 (650-326-5530).

Copyright 2015, Deseret News Publishing Company