



Robert T. Kerr

February 4, 1932 - January 9, 2023

On January 9, 2023 Robert Theodore Kerr, beloved husband, father and grandfather, died surrounded by his family in Walnut Creek, California.

Bob was born in 1932 in Long Beach, California to US Naval officer Albert Victor Kerr and Mary Ellen Gertrude (Taylor) Kerr. Long Beach was just one of many cities where Bob grew up as his family followed his father to various military posts stateside and overseas.

During his senior year in high school, the family moved to San Francisco where Bob graduated from Lincoln High School in 1950. While his father hoped that Bob would follow in his footsteps and make the navy his career, Bob had a different idea - he wanted to go to college. Throughout his childhood he read extensively and was eager to expand his knowledge through higher education. He was the first in his family to attend college and earn a degree.

Bob began his college career at City College of San Francisco, which was interrupted by the Korean War, where he served as a medical corpsman at the Annapolis Naval Hospital. Even as he served his country, he continued to pursue his education by taking correspondence courses through UC Berkeley. On his return to California, he enrolled at Berkeley as a zoology major. There, in a zoology class, he met Carolyn Olsson. Carolyn and Bob were married on

August 11, 1957 in Danville, CA. They were married for 65 years, until Carolyn's passing in August 2022.

The pair pursued their education together and lived on Carl Street in San Francisco across from UCSF, where Carolyn completed her medical degree, and Bob his Master's in psychology at San Francisco State University. Bob supported them by biking around the city as a Fuller Brush salesman.

From 1960 to 1970 the family experienced many changes. Linda was born in July 1960, and soon after Bob began his teaching career at Mount San Antonio Junior College in Pomona, CA.

The rest of the children were born during this time; Stephen in 1962, Eileen in 1964 and Susan in 1967. While living in southern California, the family discovered camping and both Bob and Carolyn embraced it. Since they needed a tent large enough for all six members of the family, Bob researched and found a spacious "Moss" brand tent, which was famous in the family even after it was retired. On an early camping trip at Dinosaur National Park, Bob created a song about the tent that he would sing around the campfire. It imagined that the tent began as a dinosaur named Boris who, after several adventures, decided to join the Kerr family and became their favorite tent.

The family lived in Claremont, CA until 1970 when Bob was hired at Modesto Junior College. They bought a house in Modesto and began a small garden in the backyard. Soon they realized that city life wasn't for them, and in 1974 they bought a small farm outside of Denair. There was space for a large garden, and the family made improvements throughout the years. One of the first tasks was to build a barn. Dirt was brought in for the foundation, but rather than renting a heavy roller, Bob drove their Buick back and forth across the dirt foundation to compact the soil. The family visited warehouses that were being dismantled in downtown Modesto to acquire the larger beams for the barn.

Bob and Carolyn lived on the farm until 2015, raising animals, growing almonds, fruit trees and a bountiful garden. While Carolyn focused on the organic vegetable garden, Bob spent many hours weeding (no puncture vines were allowed to live on the farm!), mowing the pasture with his John Deere tractor and nurturing a poppy garden in the front yard.

Farm life was made educational but fun for the kids. All were tasked with hand-harvesting the almonds and processing them in the evenings around the dinner table. Bob was the photography leader for Hughson 4-H and the kids became involved with 4-H projects such as photography and gardening. Susan and Eileen became experts in raising sugar beets and rabbits and Linda and Steve raised FFA sheep and pigs for their projects.

At MJC, Bob was active as both a teacher and leader. He was one of the founders of the faculty union, Yosemite Faculty Association, and was the first Dean of the Business, Behavioral and Social Science division. His calm, reasonable, yet humorous manner made him respected and beloved across the campus. Bob and Carolyn became a part of the close-knit BBSS faculty and enjoyed group camping trips to Sunset State Beach. Bob retired from MJC in 1994.

Bob's passions in life included family, cars, classical music, and photography. If the kids dared to sleep in too late on a weekend, they were awakened by the blast of the stereo – Wagner's "1812 Overture" was a favorite tool. The camping trips, family events, and even every car owned by the family were recorded by "Bob the Photographer." He had a keen eye for a landscape and caught the kids in charming situations. His favorite shot was a beautiful sunset, but his lovely wife Carolyn most often served as his muse.

Bob and Carolyn were a true team in their marriage—they took on the challenges of raising four children, continuing their education, changing careers, and maintaining a farm together. Bob always found time to do the little things that supported the family and kept them secure, from checking the fluid levels and tire pressures in all family cars to making sure his children learned defensive driving skills on the back roads near the farm. His wicked sense of humor was legendary, and present until his passing.

Our dad leaves us with happy memories of playing Parcheesi (which he always won) and his ever-present sense of humor. His loving nature was the bond that held the family together. We will always remember our father as both a loving parent and fierce protector.

Bob is survived by his sister Mary Kress of Concord, CA, his four children: Linda Brandt (David) of Pinole, CA, Stephen Kerr of Renton, WA, Eileen Kerr (Darin Haydock) of Turlock, CA and Susan Kerr (Nelson Siefkin) of Denair, CA. Bob's eight grandchildren include: Kara Franklin (Robert), Chelsea Brandt, Ethan Brandt, Lucas Brandt, Madeleine Kerr, Frances Haydock, Morgan Haydock, and Robin Siefkin. He was preceded in death by his wife Carolyn Olsson Kerr.

A memorial service will be held for Robert and Carolyn Kerr at the Mary Stuart Rogers Building on MJC's West Campus on May 20, 2023 at 1 pm. In lieu of flowers please send memorial donations to the MJC Foundation at: <https://mo.destojcfoundation.org/>.

Previous Events

Memorial Service

MAY 20. 1:00 PM (PT)

Modesto Junior College - West Campus
2201 Blue Gum Ave.
Modesto, CA 95358

Mary Stuart Rogers Building