



Mr. Robert L. Hayden

October 29, 1929 - May 7, 2013

Robert Lawrence “Bob” Hayden, 83, of Bluffton, passed away at 1:25 a.m. on Tuesday, May 7, 2013 at his home.

Born in Grand Rapids, Mich. on Oct. 29, 1929 to Ray Archie and Evelyn Marie (Higley) Hayden, he married Cathy May (McAfee) on August 17, 1984 in Hawaii; she survives.

Bob graduated from Catholic Central High School in 1947 and attended Grand Rapids Michigan Junior College. He was a U.S. Navy veteran, serving from 1947 to 1950 with the rank of Midshipman. He was in the U.S. Navy Flight Program and was an engineering major in the naval program.

Bob was a member and former trustee of the First Reformed Church of Bluffton, a mentor with Big Brothers Big Sisters, and a former Boy Scout Leader. He was one of the founders of the Bluffton chapter of Ducks Unlimited. He was also a long-time member of and donor to D.U.

Bob began his career as meat manager at a Kroger store in his hometown in 1950. He moved up the ladder there as Store Manager, Zone Manager and finally a Grocery Merchandiser in Grand Rapids before moving to Chicago in 1967 where he was also a Grocery Merchandiser. In 1970, he moved to Kroger’s headquarters in Cincinnati where as a Special Projects Consultant, he developed warehouses and stores for the entire chain.

He was named Director of Merchandising and Operations for Kroger in 1971, and then was named President of Market Basket, a division of Kroger on the west coast, based in Los Angeles. While there, he served a Director of the

Western Association of Food Chains, Vice-Chairman of Los Angeles Business Men's Association, and was Director of the California Retailer's Association. In 1983, he was tabbed to be the manager of Peyton's Northern, Inc., a division of Krogers, which brought him to Bluffton where he was responsible for the start-up, training and managing the new warehouse operations. In 1984, Bob left the Kroger umbrella to serve as the President, CEO and Director of Fisher Foods, a 62-market chain based in Cleveland, Ohio. He retired from that position in 1987, but was convinced by a friend to help him resurrect a pizza crust bakery and pizza manufacturing plant he had started in Mount Perry, Ohio. Bob served as President and CEO of the Buckeye Pizza Group; they increased the company's annual sales to \$7 million and sold the company in 1993.

It was at this point in his career that he returned to Bluffton to retire and continue a new company he had formed in 1987 to market the wood sculptures he had created his entire life. Bob's hand carved and hand painted duck decoys have become collectors' items, and he soon included the building of duck-hunting scull boats.

He was soon recruited, however, to head the Bluffton Chamber of Commerce and serve as Chairman of the Economic Development Commission. Bob was instrumental in consolidating the county's chamber and economic development efforts under one umbrella, creating the Wells County Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development corporations. He retired from this position in 1999 but was then convinced to serve as the CEO of the newly-created Huntington County Economic Development Corporation, from which he retired in Dec., 2001.

In addition to his wife, Bob is survived by two daughters, Kristina L. Hayden of Laguna Niguel, Calif., Jennifer M. (Jason) Knudson of Collingswood, N.J.; three sons, Robert L. (Patricia) Hayden, Jr., of Flower Mound, Texas, Michael E. (Diane) Hayden of Fallbrook, Calif., and John E. (Andrea Hofer) Hayden of Weed, Calif.; a step-son, John M. (Jennifer) Langley, of New Haven; a sister, Nancy M. (Jeff Donnelly) Wolcott of Miami Beach, Fla.; a brother, James J.

(Kathleen) Hayden of Grandville, Mich.; 13 grandchildren, Brian Carter, Michael Hayden, Maria Hayden, James Hayden, Melissa (Scott) D'Avanzo, Matthew Hayden, Adam Hayden, Ana (Daniel) Aquirre, John Hayden, Jr., Zachary Hayden, Riley Hayden, Jacob Hayden, and Vienna Knudson; two step-grandchildren, Landon Langley, and Libby Langley; seven great-grandchildren, Isabella, Ashton, Emma, Brayden, Ava, Daniel, and Nolan. In addition to his parents he is preceded in death by two sisters, Marilyn L. Martin in 2009; Doloros R. Johnson in 1987; and by a grandson, Ryan Hayden in 2009.

Calling hours are 2 to 8 p.m. Friday, May 10, at Thoma/Rich, Chaney & Lemler Funeral Home. Services will be held at 10:30 a.m. Saturday, May 11, at the funeral home with calling one hour prior to service. Dr. Bryson Bell will officiate.

Burial will be in the St. Paul Cemetery, Rockcreek Twp., Wells County. Preferred memorials are to the First Reformed Church.

Cemetery Details

St. Paul Cemetery

1621 W. 300 N.
Bluffton, IN

Tribute Wall



“ *Thoma/Rich, Lemler Funeral Home created a Tribute Video in memory of Mr. Robert L. Hayden*



Thoma/Rich, Lemler Funeral Home - May 07, 2013 at 12:00 AM



“ *Mr. Robert L. Hayden*

September 08, 2022 at 08:26 PM



“ *1 file added to the album New Album Name*



Julie Wagner - May 10, 2013 at 01:05 PM



“ *Lavender & White Sympathy Basket was purchased for the family of Mr. Robert L. Hayden.*



May 09, 2013 at 11:26 AM



“ *Blue & White Sympathy Floor Basket was purchased for the family of Mr. Robert L. Hayden.*



May 09, 2013 at 11:09 AM



“ *Peaceful Wishes was purchased for the family of Mr. Robert L. Hayden.*



May 09, 2013 at 10:10 AM



“ *Blue & White Sympathy Basket was purchased for the family of Mr. Robert L. Hayden.*



May 08, 2013 at 09:54 PM



“ *Our condolences to Cathy, Jennifer, Nancy, Jim and all my cousins. In memory of my talented, handsome and always entertaining Uncle. - Jennifer Wolcott Michelson and family, Melbourne, Australia*



Jennifer Michelson - May 08, 2013 at 09:12 PM

NW

“ 1 file added to the album *New Album Name*



Nancy Hayden Wolott - May 08, 2013 at 03:31 PM



“ *Blue & White Sympathy Floor Basket was purchased for the family of Mr. Robert L. Hayden.*



May 08, 2013 at 03:27 PM

MK

“ *Bob was an amazing man. I always enjoyed the stories of the things he had accomplished and experienced in his life. He was also very kind and cared about other people. He would always ask about my family during our meetings. I wish I could have gotten to know him more.*

Mark E. Klopfenstein

Mark Klopfenstein - May 08, 2013 at 03:25 PM



“ *Multicolor Bright Sympathy Floor Basket was purchased for the family of Mr. Robert L. Hayden.*



May 08, 2013 at 02:46 PM