

Carl Mortensen

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Prepared by Lynn Mortensen

Carl grew up in Oakland, California where he spent endless hours exploring the forested canyons near his home leading to a love of the outdoors and adventure. Even at an early age he loved being in a pool or lake with a little inflatable plastic donut on each arm. His summers were spent at remote Silver Lake where he learned from his parents to be self-reliant as the nearest village was a 2-3 hour drive. His self-reliance also came from his many years with the Boy Scouts in which he eventually became an Eagle Scout. Even in his last year of life, he easily quoted the Boy Scout laws and did his best to live by them every day. His family were regular attendees at church, so Carl took the values he learned there and made them an integral part of his own personality. Carl was the kindest and most honest individual you will ever meet. Whenever confronted with a difficult person or situation, he would ask himself, "What would Jesus do?" though he didn't wear his religion on his shirtsleeve.

In high school, he found himself too small to play football, so he went out for the swim team, a decision he never regretted. Having done well at Oakland High School, he attended Cal Berkeley where he continued his swimming career in what he called the "ultimate exercise."

After graduation, Carl joined the Navy and was shipped out to Vietnam where he was commanding officer on a small survey boat. They charted sunken ships and even some undiscovered islands. He loved diving down to document old shipwrecks to add to the charts while someone on deck kept guard with heavy artillery to shoot any nosy sea crocodiles. After three years active duty, he worked as a geophysicist for U.S. Geological Survey, but continued in the Navy Reserves. A highlight of his Navy career was swimming with the Navy dolphins during an exercise in the bay. Carl was instrumental in helping the many Western Region emergency response teams plan for major earthquakes and tsunamis.

Following his active duty with the Navy, he began swimming for the Rinconada Masters and then was overjoyed when the Menlo Masters started up. He always called exercise the path to a long, healthy life, which one could engage in throughout adulthood. He loved being fit and loved the people he met on the team. Swimming with the team was the highlight of his day. Not a day went by in which he didn't mention at home some tidbit of locker room wisdom. Even as he was dying of a brain cancer, he made every effort to swim with the team until he could no longer drive nor had the energy do so.

"There are few misfortunes in the world that you cannot turn into a personal triumph if you have the iron will and the necessary skill." Nelson Mandela