



## Bobby Joe Helm

March 20, 1927 - July 22, 2022

Bobby Joe Helm, age 95, passed away peacefully in his home July 22, 2022. Bob was born March 20, 1927, in Mountain Home, Arkansas to George and Madge Helm. His father passed away when Bobby was just four years old, so he grew up under the watchful eyes of his mother, four brothers and an adoring sister. The family's faith sustained them through the difficult years of depression, drought, and a move to California in 1939 to join brothers Guy and Glen. The family settled in Bakersfield where Madge purchased a home on Sacramento St. Many happy memories were created there.

At the young age of 17, Bob joined the United States Navy and proudly served his country in the Pacific Theatre. Madge, a daily prayer warrior, saw all three enlisted sons return safely home from their service.

As fate would have it, Bob and his mother stopped in Gainesville, Texas as they were headed to Arkansas for a visit. It was there that he became smitten by the beautiful young woman working at the soda fountain who would become his first love. Bob's attempts to woo Evelyn Lemons with flowers and letters were successful. She boarded the train bound for California and was met by Bob and her soon to be brothers- and sisters-in-law. Bob and Evelyn established their home in Bakersfield, and their first two children, Michael and Robert, were born there.

It was during this time that Bob began his career as a cotton gin manager. Several years later, he and Evelyn moved the family to Laton where he accepted the position as the manager of Laton Co-op Gin. He established

himself as a leader in the industry and served on the board of California Cotton Ginners' Association as president. His ingenuity led to safety and efficiency inventions whose iterations are still in use in cotton gins today. While residing in Laton, the births of daughters Lynda and Deborah completed the family.

Bob's strong convictions regarding education and volunteerism led to a term of service as president of the school board for Laton Unified School District. His children took up that mantle of volunteerism as they continue to serve their respective communities.

In the early 1960's, Bob had a change of careers, and over the next thirty years he held management positions at Stewart Warner Gauges, Kingsrow Ford, and Bookout Datsun.

Bob's heart was broken when Evelyn passed away in 1980, bringing their 32-year marriage to a sad end. He had been her comforter, encourager, and caregiver throughout her battle with cancer. His grief was temporarily consoled several months later when daughter Lynda gave birth to grandson Chad. His memories of Evelyn's captivating smile, dedication to raising the children, and shared love of weekends sailing at Millerton Lake or in the High Sierra Regatta sustained him through this dark time.

But, a chance meeting during a dance club event changed the course of Bob's life from one of solitude to a lifelong partnership. Bob and Maria were married in 1985 in a ceremony officiated by his brother Tommy. Soon after, they shared in the long anticipated and joyous occasion of granddaughter Jaime's arrival. Chad and Jaime share memories of Grandpa taking them on excursions to select the just-right pumpkin that would become a whimsical or haunting jack-o-lantern. And who knew that a promise to purchase Chad's first automobile would lead to a trailer loaded with hundreds of parts and a project that would be years in the making.

Bob and Maria's extended family doubled when Deborah married Danny, and Dustin and Melissa became bonus grandchildren.

Bob and Maria's marriage was indeed a partnership; they were partners in

dance, partners in work, and partners in travel. His love for Maria is best exemplified by his immersion into her Lithuanian heritage. He and Maria visited Lithuania twice, where they walked the very streets that her parents strolled decades earlier. He continued to absorb the culture and traditions at Lithuanian fairs in Los Angeles. He shared this knowledge with Lynda and Jaime as they planned Girl Scout World Thinking Day, and with Deborah's middle school students by teaching them how to dye Easter eggs in the Lithuanian tradition.

Although Bob was unable to travel these past few years, he and Maria share three decades of memories of travel around the world, countries from Argentina to Zimbabwe, and dozens in between. There were few destinations Bob did not visit, so he was always anxious to hear of his son Robert's archaeological digs in Italy or time spent in remote Guatemalan villages. Bob would also tell you that the most impactful journey of his life was being escorted by his son Michael (a Vietnam Veteran) on the WWII veterans' Honor Flight to their memorial in Washington D.C.

Bobby Joe Helm was many things, a sailor, woodworker, baker, painter, knitter, dancer, Wi bowling and golf champion, storyteller, Realtor (All Estates Realtors for over 20 yrs.), husband, father, grandfather, friend, and a believer in Jesus Christ for his eternal salvation.

Bob was predeceased by his wife Evelyn; parents George and Madge Helm; brothers Guy, Glen, Claude, and Tommy Helm; sister LaVern Karr.

He is survived by his loving wife Maria Helm; sons Michael and Robert Helm; daughters Lynda Spray (Wendell), Deborah Helm Stewart (Danny); sisters-in-law Pat Wolfe, Shirley Mathews (Sonny); brother-in-law Gary Lemons (Carolyn); grandchildren Chad Spray (Brandy), Jaime Spray, Dustin Stewart (Alena), and Melissa Linebarger (Donovan); great grandchildren Dennis Spray, Dustin Spray, Kyle Spray, Alayna Spray, Anna Spray, Dustin Shepherd (Logan), Paige Stewart, Bailey Stewart, Carson Stewart, and Thomas Linebarger, many nieces and nephews, and friends too numerous to name.

The family would like to extend a heartfelt thanks to Susie Gomez, Bob's loving caregiver, and to Jill Schaak, Dad's dedicated Kaweah Health Hospice Care nurse.

Memorial services will be held 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM Wednesday, August 10th, 2022 at Salser & Dillard Funeral Chapel, 127 E. Caldwell Ave., Visalia.

Services have been entrusted to Salser & Dillard Funeral Chapel. Memorial Tributes and condolences may be offered by logging onto [www.salseranddillard.com](http://www.salseranddillard.com).

In lieu of flowers, you may consider donations in Bob's honor to:

Habitat for Humanity

<https://tinyurl.com/bobbyhelm> <<https://www.habitat.org/support/honor-memory-gifts>>

Kaweah Health Hospice <<https://kaweahdeltahospitalfoundation-bloom.kindfund.com/?campaign=1154962>>

# Previous Events

## Memorial

AUG **10**. 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (PT)

Salser & Dillard Funeral Chapel  
127 E. Caldwell Ave.  
Visalia, CA 93277

# Tribute Wall



“ *Salser & Dillard Funeral Chapel created a Webcast in memory of Bobby Joe Helm*



Salser & Dillard Funeral Chapel - August 10, 2022 at 10:05 AM

SM

“ *Good Morning Maria: Saying goodbye to Bobby Joe brings mixed emotions for so many of us this day...for all the pleasant memories of ballroom dancing and to remember all the travels we shared together over the years....and now we must bid adieu to our friend, dancer, traveler, storyteller....and wonderful companion....that you shared with all of us. God bless you as you look forward with life's journey into the future as you have been blessed in the past.*

Steve & Marie Moore - August 10, 2022 at 03:05 PM



“ *Small Garden Dish was purchased for the family of Bobby Joe Helm.*



August 08, 2022 at 02:40 PM

TE

“ As Co-Managers at Walnut Park Retirement it was our pleasure to know Bob. He was an inspiration to all that knew him. Always a kind word. A gentleman in all respects. We will miss him and cherish the time we were honored to be with him. Terry and Debra Eaton

---

**Terry and Debra Eaton** - August 04, 2022 at 08:06 PM

SL

“ Bob was such an inspiration. Got to know him very well when he came to Walnut Park and played such an important part of my activity program...taking charge of WII sports...which at 1 point had over 8 teams. He showed me and other how to navigate the aging process in a very positive matter. I can truly say he touched my heart and I feel so fortunate to have gotten to him...he will be missed.....❤️ Sheree

---

**Sheree Lopez** - August 02, 2022 at 12:19 PM