William E. Brooks(1916 - 2016)



William (Bill) Edward Brooks has "gone west". He died September 15 at the age of 100. Bill was born February 9, 1916, in Klamath Falls, OR to Alden Ira and Leota Jean Brooks and grew up on a cattle ranch where he learned hard work and respect for others that later brought him great success in every aspect of his life. He enlisted in the US Army Air Corps in 1943 to become an aircraft mechanic but entered the wrong door and inadvertently successfully passed the pilot entry test and was appointed an aviation cadet and sent to Air Corps pilot training. He graduated with his wings in 1944 and continued Army Air Force flying of many aircraft types, including both single engine fighters and multi-engine transports until WWII's end. After mustering out, Bill became a construction contractor and built several

buildings in Medford, OR that still stand today. As the economy wound down in Oregon in the early 70s, Bill loaded up his tools in his truck and drove to Alaska where he quickly created a successful construction firm. He built several buildings in the Anchorage and Palmer area and at the Anchorage airport where he constructed several large warehouses and office buildings. Bill was quite active in Rotary throughout his life. He was a driving force in Alaska's aviation community, participating in QBs, chairing the Air Force Association, helping write and market a book on Alaska's role in WWII, creating the Air Cargo Association that still exists today, providing capital and support for the Alaska Aviation Museum ensuring its eventual success and participating in the first private light aircraft flight between Alaska and Russia in 75 years. He received the prestigious Wright Brothers Master Pilot award in 2006 for over 50 years of flying without an accident. At age 98, Bill flew his Beaver on floats for over an hour and artfully became recurrent with three grease-job touchdowns. Bill and Lorraine travelled the world, including trips with high ranking Air Force people and always set a high standard for Alaska's support of the military. Bill was an avid hunter and fisherman and was always the top marksman in all his many hunting trips. He knew the best fishing spots in Alaska and seldom was skunked on a fishing trip. He was an automobile and speed enthusiast and at the age of 72, set a world land speed record of 244.198 mph at the Bonneville Salt Flats in Utah in the B Modified Sport Class with his Corvette. He was considered the honorary grandfather of the Nondalton Alaska native community who honored him by naming a bay on Lake Clark Chada Brooks Cove. Many acquaintances so honored and respected him it was not uncommon to hear "I want to be like Bill Brooks when I grow up". Bill was preceded in death by his daughter Linda Deloris Lingren. He is survived by his wife, Lorraine Helen; his son, Chuck; four grandchildren, Mike Brooks, Dale (Robin) Smith, Randy (Penny) Smith, and Ray (Joyce) Smith; two great-granddaughters Ashly Anne (Neale) Jones and Ashley T (Drew) Walter; and 11 great-great grandchildren. A Celebration of Life for Bill will be held at the Alaska Aviation Museum October 8 from 5-8 pm. Bill's ashes will be spread over Lake Clark in the coming spring with an escort by many of his friends and pilots who will gather for the final farewell. Memorial contributions may be made to the Alaska Aviation Museum.

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