



## Robert Edson Shafer

July 3, 1923 - September 5, 2013

Robert Edson Shafer July 3, 1923 – September 5, 2013

Born July 3, 1923 in Hartford, Michigan to Dell and Ruth Shafer, our father built a prosperous life that revolved around his love of the outdoors and adventuresome curiosity.

As a Captain in the US Army Air Corps from 1942 – 46, he was stationed in both the United States and European Theatres of Operation. A member of the 441st Troop Carrier Group, he participated in the Normandy Invasion and was among the first American soldiers in Berlin after being dispatched to secure the Tempelhof airport in May of 1945. After the war, Robert moved to Alaska to pursue adventure and an education. He worked on the construction of the Alaska Highway as well as on gold mining dredges north of Fairbanks. In 1947, he and five friends set out to drive Jeeps along the Pan American Highway from Alaska to Argentina. He received a degree in mining engineering from the University of Alaska Fairbanks, where he met and married Elizabeth Donnelly, a registered nurse, in 1949.

This fruit farmer and independent mining consultant grew his family to six children – Sharon Fessenden (Zef); Stephanie Shieldhouse (Richard); Patricia Badland (Charles); Martha Shea (Larry); Mark (Simona) and Matthew (Kendra) – and 10 grandchildren. After living in Alaska, Washington, Idaho, New York and South America, they settled their children in Lakeland, Florida. Mining took him overseas to six of the continents and over 50 countries

around the world. Every summer, Robert and Elizabeth would pack up the kids and animals in the family station wagon to spend the summer in Hartford, Michigan, working the family fruit farm.

Lakeland was home for over 30 years, before moving to Tallahassee to be near children and grandchildren. Robert looked forward to every morning – to feel the parchment of the daily town paper, complete the crossword, enjoy novels and fill his retirement years with trips to the library, senior center, the grocer and daily walks around Lake Ella. In addition to his kids and grandkids, he is survived by his brother, Steve Shafer (Ginny). Bevis Funeral Home, 850-385-2193, [www.bevisfh.com](http://www.bevisfh.com), is assisting the family with the arrangements.

# Tribute Wall

JS

“ *Stephanie and Steve,*

*Please accept my deepest sympathy in the passing of your father, and brother. I don't recall meeting him but understand he was one to be proud to have known. He is familiar to me only in my research the our family history.*

*God bless you all,*

*Jim Shafer  
Arvada, Colorado*

---

**Jim Shafer** - October 04, 2013 at 09:15 AM

“ Dear Patricia,

*As a child, I remember you had infinite admiration for your father and cherished spending as much time as possible with him on his leaves home from work posts abroad. I can still remember watching you in the Edgewater Beach kitchen scooping a large tumbler from overhead the bar, filling it with ice, measuring just the correct amount of rum, then filling the remainder with Coke for your father's evening Cuba Libre. Before bringing it to him, you reverently prepared as side tidbits some cut in 2 maraschino cherries, each spiked on a toothpick along with little cut squares of American cheese (the slim ones individually wrapped in plastic that often go on top of hamburgers). You then carried both proudly and carefully to your dad who was inevitably reading the newspaper or some journal in one of the rattan armchairs in the family room or veranda. I also remember your dad enjoying taking long walks around Lakeland, from the house "all the way" to downtown (maybe 3 miles max?). At the time, it seemed quite bizarre that anyone would actually walk there but having lived overseas now for 30 years I realize this was most likely a habit your dad picked up from being abroad as typically, Americans take their cars automatically to go anywhere more than a block! I always remember being quite unjustly jealous when your dad arrived back home in Lakeland and your wanting to spend all your free time with him after school and not play with me. I was such a pain that you had to go to the extent of inventing a reason to get mad at me to justify not seeing me for all the time he was at home before leaving back out abroad, only to make the first peace gesture once he was gone. It's unfortunate that neither of us had the insight we do today...as I child I didn't understand what it was like to miss your father who was frequently absent for long periods of time and was unable to emphasize or give you breathing space to enjoy him during that time. On the other hand, your mother and father were such wonderful, warm people that I'd spent much of my younger years wishing they were my parents too, wishing I was a part of your family, feeling so much affection from your mother and the welcoming home she had created. I'm sure that you also hadn't understood that clearly*

*enough to rationalize as a young child either! In any case, your love and admiration for your father remained with you throughout your and his life. Forgive me if my time lines are somewhat inaccurate, but nonetheless, when the time came for your father to retire & come home permanently to the US and his Lakeland home with your mother, she was diagnosed shortly after with Alzheimer's. I admired very much how much he deeply cared for her throughout all the years of her illness. I'd never thought about it before, only now while writing this (I suppose due to myself getting closer to retirement age today), this probably wasn't how he'd dreamed of spending his retirement days. Yet he was unfailingly kind, optimistic, loving and caring for your mother right up until she passed away many years later. A final memory I'll evoke is when your dad beat my brother Frank at chess! My brother was ...let's face it, somewhat arrogant and so sure that he could beat the world --much less your father!--at chess, genius that he was (and still is...a genius I mean!)...and yes we all kids had heard about the upcoming challenge Franky-Mr. Shafer...it was hard for your father not to be a little bit pleased --and show it by the smirk on his face--that he'd won. But aside from the day of the challenge smirk and mischevious glitter in his eyes, your dad never mentioned it again and if any of the kids brought up (at least when I was there), he remained quite evasive about the whole subject. He was always discreet. I'll stop here because I'll be writing a book soon. Sending my love and express all my and my family's deepest and most respectful condolences to you, Charles and Beckett, as well as to your brothers and sisters. I am sure you will will sorely miss him as your great I*

---

**Christine Bassaber** - September 11, 2013 at 02:55 PM