

In Memoriam: Philip Coleman, 1920-2010

Philip Coleman Bean, 89, passed away early Sunday morning, February 28 in Santa Rosa, CA. Phil was a long-time East Bay resident, born August 2, 1920 in Provo, UT. His family relocated to Thatcher, AZ briefly, then to Berkeley, CA when he was about two. Phil's father, after receiving his masters in botany at UC, took a position with the University of Hawaii and the family moved to Honolulu when Phil was seven. In later years, Phil often spoke fondly of the Island Paradise he knew growing up, living there ten years while his father taught and worked on his doctorate degree. The family returned to Berkeley in 1937, but Phil would forever yearn for the island home of his youth. He fulfilled that dream, in part, when he went back in 1964 with his own young family to spend most of a summer on Oahu, sharing the places and things he remembered so well – and his amazement at so much which had changed. Far from cured, he made more visits to the Islands in later years.

In his early twenties, Phil returned to Utah, the land of his pioneer ancestors, to attend Brigham Young University. An event in 1944 had some profoundly life-altering consequences -- he was involved in a serious commuter train mishap. In an Ogden hospital he was entrusted to the care of a young nurse, Thora Lewis – his “nurse angel.” They were married in March 1945. The couple moved to Los Angeles where Phil found work as a cabinet-maker, later enrolling in the Art Center School in Pasadena. There he refined a rare gift for commercial art and design, and made life-long friends among top talent in the industrial design world, while Thora put bread on their table nursing the “rich and famous of Hollywood.”

In 1948, they moved to the Berkeley area where Phil worked for Grove Regulator and Donner Laboratory, then hired on at the Lawrence Berkeley Lab. His skills and creativity soon became prized in the Lab's Mechanical Design Department, where he spent the next 35 years – his specialty taking often-sketchy research test concepts (“napkin designs”) and coming up with practical equipment to make these tests work. His challenge, his joy and at times his aggravation was to work with leading physicists and specialists in an array of other disciplines (a smattering of Nobel Prize winners in the mix), on pioneering designs for nuclear particle accelerators and early medical imaging technology.

Phil and Thora purchased a lot in the El Cerrito Hills in 1950 and began building a home of Phil's own design, featuring such modern innovations as push-button lights and radiant floor heating. They lived there fifty-five years, raising four *wonderful* children – filling the home with memories until it could hold no more. Phil's garage/workshop was equipped with the tools and the know-how to create almost anything imaginable, or to allow young craftsmen and tinkerers to work at making dreams of their own.

Phil was a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day-Saints -- Berkeley, El Cerrito and Richmond Wards. He rejoins Thora, his nurse-angel of 63 years, who passed on in April of 2008. He is survived by his three sons, Philip L. Bean (Deborah) of Santa Rosa, Kendall Bean of Walnut Creek, Kevin Bean of Berkeley, and daughter Linda Bean Skankey (Wayne) of Portland, Oregon. He is also survived by 10 grandchildren and 7 great-grandchildren.

Services will be Friday, March 5 at 11:00 am at the Berkeley Ward Meetinghouse, 1501 Walnut Street, Berkeley, CA.

