

Half Staff – Melvin A. Olson

January 20, 2010



GLOUCESTER — Melvin (Mel) August Olson died on Wednesday, Jan. 20, 2010, at the age of 94 after a short illness in Gloucester. Mel was born on May 28, 1915, in the Pigeon Cove section of Rockport. His parents, August Olson and Sigrid Swanson Olson immigrated from Sweden. August was a granite carver with the quarries in Rockport. Mel lived in Pigeon Cove and then in the south section of Rockport for 90 years, until he moved in 2005 to The Herrick House assisted living facility in Beverly.

Mel proudly graduated from Rockport High School and Harvard College, Class of 1936, with a BS in Chemistry. He married Elizabeth (Betty) Cruickshank from Manchester in 1942. They had been married 60 years when she died in 2002.

Mel enlisted in the U.S. Navy at the beginning of World War II in 1941. He rose rapidly through the ranks, and was made a commander of a flotilla of LCT's, amphibious troop carriers. He participated in invasions in Sicily, Salerno and Anzio, Italy. His decorations included the Purple Heart and the Legion of Merit. He retired from the Navy with the rank of Commander.

Mel founded the MA Olson Co. Inc. in 1961, sales engineers of industrial process equipment. During that time, he and his other representatives traveled extensively. The company continues to bear his name 32 years after his retirement.

Following his retirement, he and Betty enjoyed extensive travel and spent winters in Naples, Fla. Not one to sit idle, Mel went on to the board of directors of the Granite Savings Bank, becoming chairman and leading the bank through the Savings and Loan crisis of the 1980s. Mel also was very active member of the Rockport Rotary Club through 2009.

Mel was a member of the Sandy Bay Yacht Club and an enthusiastic sailor, who enjoyed day sails with friends and family. He served on the Rockport Advisory Board in the 1950s, was a Mason and a Shriner, and was an active, loyal member and supporter of the First Congregational Church of Rockport.

Mel also loved spectator sports and was an avid Red Sox and Harvard sports fan. He was at two famous games: the 1975 World Series 6th game when, in the 12th inning, Carlton Fiske waived his ball fair on his way to first base, giving the Bosox a 7-6 win over the Cincinnati Reds, in many fans' opinion, the most electrifying game ever played. He was also at the famous Harvard-Yale football game in 1968, when Harvard "beat" Yale 21-21, coming from 16 points behind in the last 46 seconds of the game.

In addition to his late wife, Betty, Mel leaves daughter, Sigrid Lindo; and son, Peter Olson; Sigrid's husband, Stephen of Montclair and Rockport; and their sons, Alex and Sam; and Peter's longtime companion, Cecelia (DD) Thomsen; and Mel's close friend from Herrick House, Julia Morgan.

ARRANGEMENTS: A memorial service celebrating Mel's life will be held at the First Congregational Church of Rockport, Monday, Jan. 25 at 11 a.m. In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations either

to the First Congregational Church of Rockport or the Rotary Club of Rockport Scholarship Fund. Arrangements are by the Burgess & Mackey Funeral Home, 201 Main St., Rockport. Condolences may be sent online to www.greelyfuneralhome.com.