

Albert P. Behrens, Jr.



September 17, 1922 - July 30, 2020



On July 30, 2020, Albert P. Behrens, Jr., age 97, died in his home in Spring Lake Village in Santa Rosa, California. Al had been a long-time, well-known resident of Petaluma, California as the Behrens family, natives of Denmark, first settled near Petaluma in 1864 on a ranch bordering the Sonoma-Marin County line. Al was born in Petaluma, California, on September 17, 1922, to Albert and May (Cole) Behrens, Sr. He and his sister Betty grew up in Petaluma, both graduates of Petaluma High School. Al attended Stanford University in Palo Alto, intending to pursue a degree in business, but World War II changed his plans. Just months after Pearl Harbor, Al joined the Army reserves and was called up to the infantry within the year. Al volunteered for the Army Specialized Training Program in 1943 which allowed him to take college courses prescribed by the army for one year in preparation for combat. He was sent to Carleton College in Minnesota, but before the year was over, Congress defunded the program, and Al joined the 42nd Army infantry known as the Rainbow Division, and was sent to France in November of 1944 just in time for the Battle of the Bulge. Captured by the Germans on January 9, 1945, he spent three months as a POW in Germany before being rescued by General Patton's forces. After time in hospitals in England, he returned to California and received his honorable discharge and was awarded with two Bronze Battle Stars and an ETO (Eastern Theater Offensive) Ribbon. Al returned to Stanford University where he attended Law School, graduating in 1948. After graduation he joined a law firm in Watsonville, California, and it was there on a blind date that he met his wife Betty Jane (nee Cockcroft). They were married in 1950 and returned to Petaluma where Al joined a small law firm, beginning his practice in estate and trust law. In 1952, he formed a partnership with another lawyer, Clyde Nelson, Jr., and they stayed partners for almost 50 years until Al retired in 2001.

Al and Betty Jane raised three daughters and were devoted to their five grandchildren. Betty Jane loved to entertain and plan family gatherings, and BBQs on their patio with homemade ice cream were frequent summer events. They loved to travel, particularly to Maui, the Mendocino coast and to visit friends in Palm Springs. They frequently enjoyed day trips and other cross-country excursions with Day tripping. Both Al and Betty Jane enjoyed attending concerts, the theater and movies. They belonged to several bridge clubs and were very active in the community. They were long-time members of St. John's Anglican Church and the Petaluma Host Lions Club. Al and Betty Jane were devoted to each other during their almost 48 years of marriage.

After Betty Jane's death in 1998, Al continued to enjoy excursions with Day tripping, and for many years he delivered lunchtime meals to senior citizens (most of whom were younger than he was) for Meals on Wheels where he was widely known as a very helpful and understanding friend who genuinely cared about everyone. Al loved to read, work crossword puzzles and he enjoyed family Christmases in his Petaluma home where his grandchildren all loved being his Canasta partner. He especially loved spending time with his grandchildren and great-grandchildren. He will be fondly remembered as never tiring of reading and rereading Mrs. Duck's Lovely Day as his grandchildren, and more recently, great-grandchildren snuggled in his lap. In 2019, Al moved to an apartment at Spring Lake Village in Santa Rosa where he lived next door to his sister, Betty Greenway. The two of them enjoyed Day tripping excursions, playing bridge and the many wonderful activities offered by their retirement community.

Al is survived by his children, Jean Ann McChristian (Tom), Barbara Jane Biddle (Doug), and Susan Marie Rowlands (Charles, deceased); grandchildren, Joel Biddle (Ellen), Emily Devers (Nathan), Laura Adu-Boahen (Kofi), Catherine Hood (Kenny), and John McChristian (Alyssa); great-grandchildren, Benjamin, Hailey and Gareth; sister Betty Greenway, and numerous nieces and nephews. He is preceded in death by his wife Betty Jane, and his parents Albert and May Behrens.

As a result of the current pandemic, there will be no memorial service. In lieu of flowers, the family requests that gifts in memory of Al be sent to St. John's Anglican Church, 532 S. McDowell Blvd., Petaluma, California 94954. The family wishes to thank Spring Lake Village health care staff, Sutter Hospice Care, and Home Care Assistance for their personal care and kindness during the last months and weeks of Al's life. God richly blessed Al with a full life and he will be greatly missed by his family and friends. His legacy of kindness, commitment and devotion to his wife and family will always be remembered.