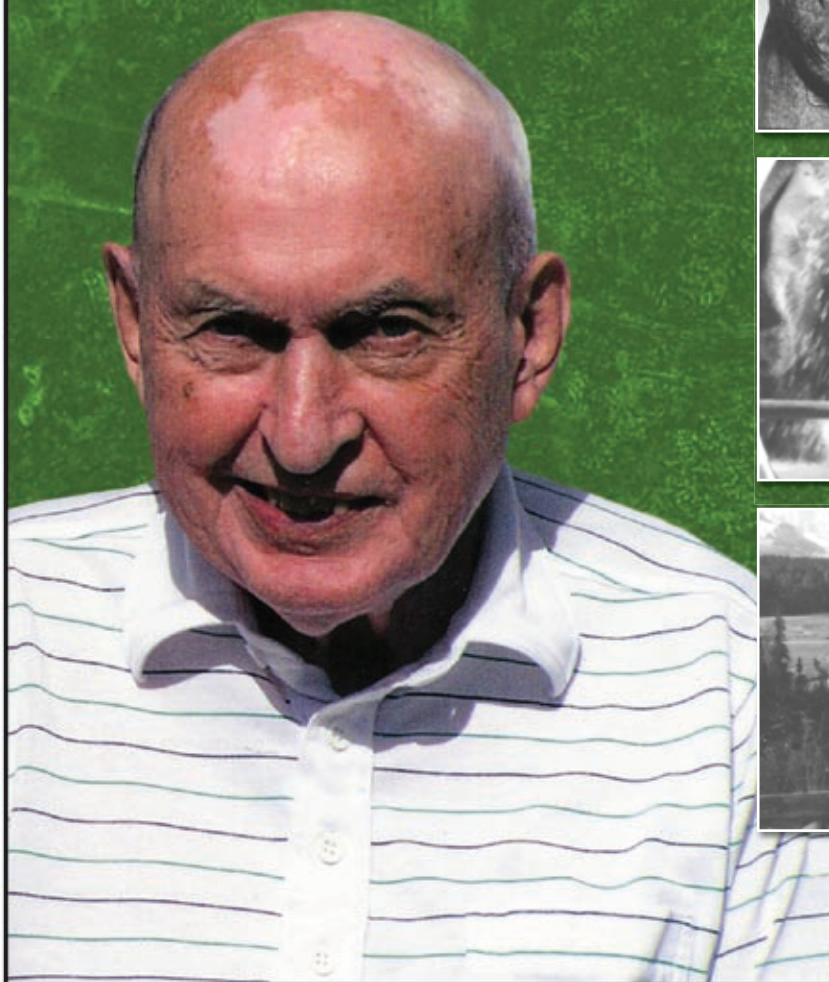


Robert McCowen

November 24, 1920 - December 23, 2010



Bob's Life Story



Although Robert McCowen traveled the world over, the moments he spent gathered with his family were the ones he treasured most. He was a devoted husband who spent more than 65 years with the love of his life by his side, creating a love story that serves as an inspiration to the generations who follow in their footsteps. Bob was a man who came into his own a bit later in life as he learned to kick back, let go at times, and to savor every last bit of what life has to offer. It was clear by the way he lived his life that Bob fully embraced the notion that it is not through the things that we have or the way that others perceive us that we find true contentment, but that it is in loving others that we find true joy.

As a new decade dawned, the year 1920 ushered us into a time that many would agree was a great time to be an American. There were countless advancements fueled by innovation that was only limited by the scope of one's imagination. This was the decade that took us soaring above the clouds with Charles Lindbergh and Amelia Earhart, flocking to see shows on Broadway that was at its all-time peak, and witnessing greats such as Babe Ruth and Ty Cobb command the baseball field. There was great joy in one young family from Benton Harbor, Michigan, during this time since it was on November 24, 1920, that they welcomed the birth of their firstborn son. Robert Hugh was welcomed into the world by his parents, Lionel and Bessie (Small) McCowen, and was later joined in his family by his younger brother, Dale, who was ten years his junior. In order to support his family, Robert's father was the owner and operator of Small and Sons Trucking. His trucking run took him from Benton Harbor to





South Bend with washing machines and dryers as some of his freight. Robert's mother was a housewife who tended to the household needs and the care of the active McCowen boys.

Raised in Benton Harbor, Bob, as he was most often known, attended local schools including Benton Harbor High School where he played tennis and was a member of the band. His grandmother was his math teacher there and often took her grandson along on her adventures. Although Bob



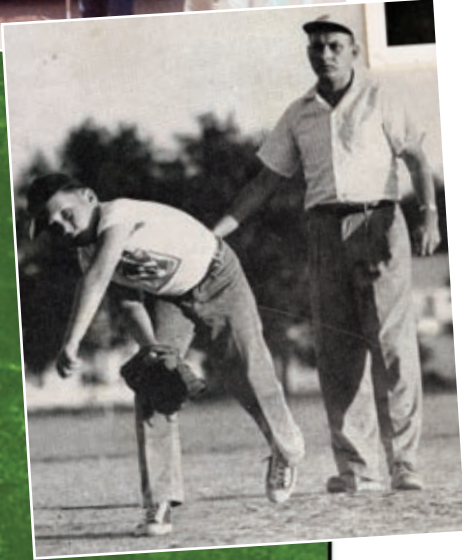
wasn't sure if either of these things were necessarily a good thing, he was always respectful and did as she wished, making memories along the way.

Right after graduating from high school in 1937, Bob continued his education at Michigan State University with his sights set on becoming a chemist, fulfilling the dream his grandmother had for him. While in college Bob was in the ROTC and was a member of the MSU chapter of Lambda Chi Alpha.

Although he graduated from Michigan State University in 1943, it was while Bob was in college that our nation was viciously attacked at our naval base in Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. With a desire to serve his country during this time of great need, Bob enlisted in the Army, beginning his service on December 11, 1942. He served at the Chemical Warfare Center in the Firestone Tire Plant, located in Akron, Ohio. As a chemical research engineer there, Bob helped research the synthetic rubber for tires, and while in the service he rose to the rank of first lieutenant. He was discharged on March 3, 1944, and in recognition of his service, Bob was awarded an American Theater Service Medal as well as a Victory Medal.

What was of the greatest importance during Bob's college years, however, was his introduction to the woman with whom he would share the best years of his life. Her name was Vivian Smith and they met at a ballroom dance at Silver



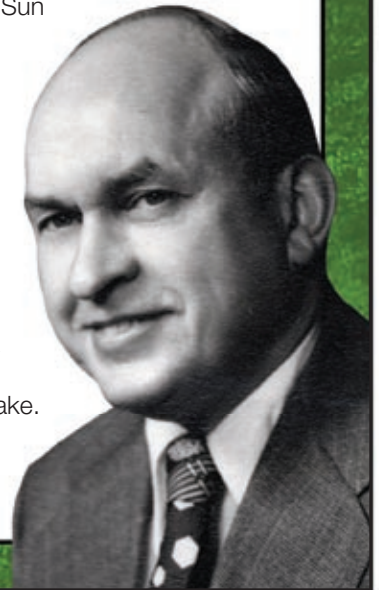


Beach in 1941. A romance ensued and after falling deeply in love, the couple married on June 12, 1943, in Benton Harbor, marking the beginning of a new chapter in their lives together. The newlyweds lived in Ohio together while Bob was stationed there during which time Vivian worked at the Goodyear plant. During some of the summer months, Bob would also work with his father-in-law, Walter Smith on construction of roads and bridges around Michigan and helping on construction projects on highways like I-94.

Together Bob and Viv, as he affectionately called her, were blessed with the births of two boys of their own, Bob and Tom. Being a father became a priority in his life, and he was actively involved in the lives of his boys. Bob was a Boy Scout advisor for years and went on many a Boy Scout trip when he most certainly would have been more comfortable sleeping in his own bed. Bob and Vivian raised their boys in Kalamazoo where he worked as a chemist in quality control for Upjohn. The family enjoyed time away during the summers at Bob's parents' cottage at Sister Lakes where precious memories were made. Although much of Bob's time was focused on his family, he was also a member of both the Masonic Lodge and the Order of the Eastern Star, and he bowled on some leagues with Upjohn and played cards throughout his life, too.

After retiring from Upjohn in 1979, Bob and Vivian moved to Sun

City, Arizona. With a desire to escape the summer heat, they took the opportunity to visit their sons who had established families of their own by that time. They divided their time between both families where they spent time not only with their sons and daughters-in-law, but also with their four grandsons: Steve, Jeff, Robert, and Carl. Jeff was always so excited to see Bob and Vivian's Buick coming down the street, announcing their arrival for the summer at Clark Lake. He will also never forget driving with his grandparents from Michigan to Florida while he was growing up.



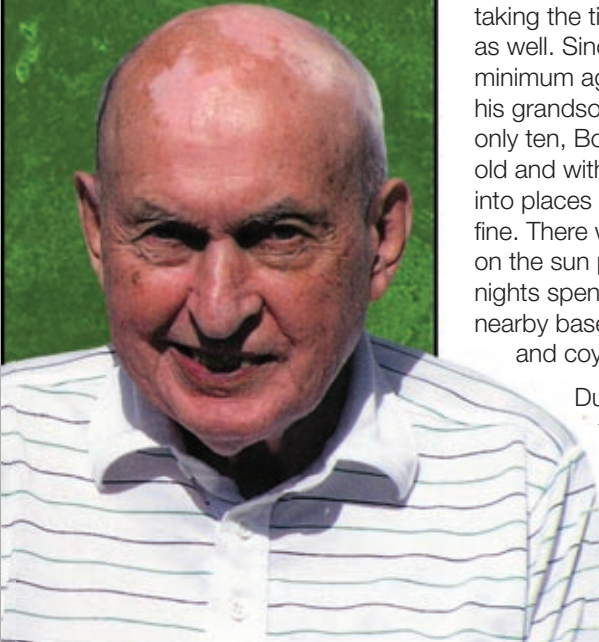
As a huge fan of his Michigan State Spartans, Bob spent many a Saturday afternoon with his grandson, Steve, at their home football games. A true Sparty to his core, Bob was even known to lead into a conversation with some of his friends who were Michigan fans with “go green!”



It was easy to see that Bob embraced every part of being a grandfather. He drew his grandsons into his interests, teaching them all about things such as hunting and golf. In fact, their house in Arizona was on a golf course, so the opportunities to play were plentiful. When his grandchildren were younger, he always took them out on the course after hours to play a few holes, taking the time to teach them the proper etiquette of the game as well. Since they lived in a retirement community, there were minimum age requirements for certain activities so Bob taught his grandsons the art of not acting their age. When Steve was only ten, Bob would often remind him that he was twelve years old and with a little wink shared between the two, Steve got into places like the swimming pool, which suited them both just fine. There were also times that Bob and his grandsons spent on the sun porch putting balls into the putting machine and nights spent outside watching the Air Force planes from the nearby base practicing maneuvers as well as the jack rabbits and coyotes out on the golf course at dusk.



During their retirement years, Bob and Vivian traveled the world with some of their more memorable trips including those to Hong Kong, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand, and throughout Europe. They also took their entire family including their grandchildren on trips with them to places





like Catalina Island and their most recent trip to Maui, Hawaii. With the addition of their four great-grandchildren, Mackenzie, Joey, Stephen, and Nicholas to their family, both Bob and Vivian couldn't have been happier.

Robert McCowen will be remembered for things such as playing golf wearing his well-loved baseball hat or taunting University of Michigan fans, but it was his endless heart for which he will be cherished most. Although he could be strict and very set in his ways like all McCowens can be at times, it was always out of his sincere love for his family. Bob was helpful and compassionate, generous and loving towards all those in his path. He was a man with strong convictions, conservative values, and frugal tendencies that leave us all with much to aspire for in today's world. A true gift in the lives of many, Bob leaves behind an unmatched legacy that will live on in the hearts and lives of the generations who follow him.

Robert H. McCowen of Sun City, AZ, formerly of Kalamazoo died on December 23, 2010. Bob's family includes his wife Vivian; two sons: Bob (Sue) McCowen, of Clark Lake; Tom (Rose) McCowen, of GA; four grandsons: Steve McCowen, of Vicksburg; Jeff (Melanie) McCowen, of VA; Rob (Traci) McCowen, of Kalamazoo; and Carl McCowen, of CO; four great-grandchildren: Mackenzie, Joey, Stephen and Nicholas; one brother, Dale (Marlys) McCowen, of FL; and one brother-in-law John Smith of St. Joseph. A memorial service will be held on Friday July 8th at 11 a.m. at the Life Story Funeral Home, 5975 Lower Lanes, Portage (344-5600). Please visit Bob's memory page at www.lifestorynet.com, where you can sign his memory book online before coming to the funeral home or make a memorial donation to the Kalamazoo Promise, Kairos Dwelling and/or charity of choice.

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