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Russell Armin "Russ" Vollertsen

BIRTH	11 Jan 1924
DEATH	10 Feb 2016 (aged 92) The Woodlands, Montgomery County, Texas, USA
BURIAL	Rosewood Cemetery Palmyra, Otoe County, Nebraska, USA
MEMORIAL ID	158054524 ·

Captain Russell "Russ" Armin Vollertsen USN (retired), 92, of Slidell, Louisiana, passed away Wednesday February 10, 2016 in The Woodlands, Texas. He was born in a log cabin on the banks of the Missouri River on January 11, 1924, the son of Harry George and Verona Emelia (Schaeffer) Vollertsen.

At the age of four, his father, a sharecropper, moved the family to the prairies of southeast Nebraska to escape the annual flooding on the Missouri River. Russ spoke only German, the language of his parents, until the age of six when he entered the first grade at District School 68, a one-room country school near Palmyra, Nebraska.

The other kids followed him around at recess to listen to the boy's strange language, not knowing the source of his "popularity". His teacher, Miss Anderson, who taught all eight grades, drew up a set of flash cards with all of the primary numbers and letters of the English alphabet, and taught him how to speak English.

Quickly, Russ became the best student in his class, passing all his subjects with straight "A's" and winning all the county

academic tests. In the summer he lifted sixty-pound hay bales; drove a tractor by the time he was seven; and in the winter hauled corncobs in the dark to the house for the stove to burn.

After school, he milked and fed cows until well after dark. When he graduated as the valedictorian at Palmyra High School in the spring of 1941, he was confident he was not going to be a farmer.

At that time, college scholarships were not offered in "full" and his partial scholarship to medical school at Creighton University was for half-tuition only. Not a prospect his parents could afford. Russ was attending business school in Lincoln and paying his way bussing tables at the old Cornhusker Hotel when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. It changed his life.

Russ had never heard of Pearl Harbor, had never seen the ocean, yet sixty days later he was an able-bodied seaman aboard the repair tender USS Medusa docked in Pearl Harbor. Many of the recently destroyed ships were still on fire. His abilities were quickly noted, and without his knowledge his chief petty officer placed his name on a list to be tested for entering the US Naval Academy.

Russ passed the fleet entrance exam, and began a slow, but steady climb through the ranks of the United States Navy, taking a great deal of pride in noting years later that one fellow classmate from Plains, Georgia graduated from the Naval Academy considerably lower in standing than did he in 1947.

He always said that his thirty-three year stint in the Navy, serving in WWII, Korea, and Vietnam was the best job he ever had. He was executive officer of two front line destroyer escorts, captain of an LST, commanded a destroyer and repair tender, and was commodore of a destroyer division before retiring as a captain in 1975.

Russ served three tours of duty in Vietnam where he was the originator of Operation Sea Dragon, the primary navy combat operation along the coast of South Vietnam.

While serving his country he was the recipient many awards including the Meritorious Unit Commendation, the

Distinguished Service Order (Vietnam), and the Bronze Star with a combat "V". He was the U.S. representative to the NATO Armaments Group in Paris, 1961-63, Chairman of the Communications Navigation Command, Brussels, Belgium, 1974-75 where his fluency in German served him well; member of the Naval Institute, Naval Academy Alumni Association, and the New Orleans Automatic Data Processing Council.

Russ was a hunter, fisherman, and tent camper, and took his boys along with him. He built and repaired boats and outboard motors; crafted and repaired furniture; repaired his own cars from ring jobs and brakes to valve jobs; laid bricks, painted cars, planted vegetable gardens, made blueberry pancakes on Sunday for the family, and cut all of his boys' hair when he was home and had a little spare time.

Russ is survived by: sons, Conrad (Pam), Vernon (Nancy), Bruce (Tonya), and Jon; and sister, Phyllis.

He was preceded in death by: his parents; and his wife, Loys Marie Howell Vollertsen.

Funeral Service on Tuesday, February 16, 2016 at Roper and Sons Chapel, Lincoln. Burial at the Rosewood Cemetery in Palmyra, Nebraska.

Obituary information from Roper and Sons Funeral Home.

Family Members

Parents



Harry G. Vollertsen
1897-1984



Verona E. *Schaeffer*
Vollertsen
1901-1996

Spouse



Loys Marie *Howell*
Vollertsen
1924-2012

Siblings



Norman O.
Vollertsen
1926-2015

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