



Captain Robert Collins Truax (USN Ret.), 93, of San Diego, California, passed away September 17th, at 4:50 p.m. Bob Truax, described by space historian, Shirley Thomas, as a “practical dreamer,” was an early advocate of a national space program and a life-long proponent of low-cost access to outer space. He received the Robert H. Goddard award for outstanding work in liquid propellant rockets as well as the Legion of Merit citation for his conceptual work on making the “Polaris” guided-missile submarine a primary naval weapon. Inducted into the Air Force Space and Missile Pioneers Hall of Fame in 2003, his legacy is hinted at in a U.S. Air Force 2007 biographical documentary, *Bob Truax: U.S. Navy’s Rocketman*: “His ideas have literally shaped the way we live today and the way we stay safe in America. Even now his ideas, both the concepts from back then and those which are still being developed and engineered, are yet thriving innovations that will show us the future.”

He was born September 3, 1917, in Gary, Indiana, the younger son of Alida and Darwin Truax. Bob married Rosalind Heath Schroeder, in 1941 and they are survived by four children: Ann Heath, Kathleen Rosalind, Steven Robert, and Gary Hale. Bob and Rosalind divorced in 1964. Bob Truax married Sally Sabins in 1964 and they lived for many years in Saratoga, CA. Sally passed away in June of 1993. They are survived by their two sons: Scott Alan and Dean Shepherd. Bob leaves 7 grandchildren and 16 great-grandchildren. On December 10, 1994 he married Marisol Guzman, who survives. Marisol’s close family including mother, Carmen Acero, sister, Andrea Vargas, brother-in-law, Ted Vargas, as well as their two children, Leo and Emily Vargas, provided a warm and loving setting for this last chapter in Bob’s life.

Bob spent his early years in a log cabin on a homestead in Mendocino County, California and later attended and graduated from Alameda High School in 1933. It was in Alameda where, as a teenager, Bob built his first rocket and embarked upon his lifelong passion. Bob became involved with rocket programs as a Naval officer during World War II. He earned a B.S. in mechanical engineering from the Naval Academy in 1939 and served aboard the USS Enterprise and Lambertson. Bob developed the Jet Assisted Take-Off for the PBY seaplane. In 1946, Truax led a team that interrogated the rocket engineer for Nazi Germany, Wernher von Braun. From 1946-49, Truax headed the Bureau of Aeronautics’ “rocket desk” in Washington, D.C., where he advanced the concept of a staged combustion system upon which the Space

Shuttle's main engines would eventually rely. Truax then developed the Naval Air Rocket Test Station in Lake Denmark, New Jersey, and went on to obtain a B.S. in aeronautical engineering from the Naval Postgraduate School and an M.S. in nuclear engineering from Iowa State College. After the war he worked on a number of ballistic missile and space launch vehicle programs including the Thor, Viking, and Polaris. He served as the American Rocket Society's President and retired in 1959 from the Navy as a Captain. After retiring from military service, Bob went to Aerojet where he headed their Advanced Development Division and led efforts such as the Sea Dragon project which involved launch and recovery of rockets at sea.

In 1966, Bob formed his own company, Truax Engineering, which developed a range of sea launched rockets. In the 70's and early 80's, Truax, heretofore prominent in scientific communities, emerged in popular culture. Literally building rockets from his own backyard in Saratoga, Truax built both of Evel Knievel's "Skycycles" for his 1974 attempt to jump the Snake River Canyon. He later competed in the original X-prize competition to send a private astronaut into suborbital flight. He also invented the reusable space tourism vehicle, *Volksrocket*. Prominently featured on television shows such as *The Tonight Show* starring Johnny Carson and popularized in the media at large, Bob wielded the attention to advance his consistent focus, rocketry. During the 90's and into the next millennium, his relentless ingenuity and enthusiasm continued with a number of rocketry projects.

Condolences may be sent to Captain Truax's widow Mrs. Marisol Truax and family at 29020 Husted Place, Valley Center, CA 92082. The family requests that memorial donations be made to a charity of your choice.

