

Gene Leo Markley (1934 - 2017)

Gene Markley was born May 25, 1934 in Henrietta Township, Richland County, Wisconsin. Gene's father, Conrad Markley, was from a line of early settlers in the Hub City, Wisconsin area. Their farm was on Hawkins Creek. Gene's father died of scarlet fever during the epidemic of 1938 when Gene was only four years old. Gene's mother was Dorothea Hardy. The Hardy's were also early settlers in the Hub City area. Gene's mother, Dorothea, later married Homer Frye and Gene was raised by his mother and stepfather. Gene passed away, March 27, 2017, in Waunakee, Wisconsin with his brother Conrad and Nephew Steve at his side.



Gene loved and excelled in sports. In high school Gene played football, boxed and ran track. In 1949 he won his first Golden Glove award. In 1952 he won his second Golden Glove, and was on a record breaking relay track team.

After graduating from Richland Center High School in 1952, Gene joined the U.S. Marine Corps. He was eventually stationed in the Far East with the U.S. Fleet Marine Force where he served for 14 months. He was discharged with the rank of Sergeant in 1955. Gene went on to study at Sierra College in Auburn, California, where he received an A.A. Degree. Gene then transferred to the University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point, where he received his B.S. Degree in Conservation. He later continued his education at the University of Wisconsin. During the years of Gene's education, he worked seasonally for the U.S. Forest Service in Northern California. He served as a fire crew foreman, a timber scaler and a surveyor. He worked on several campaign forest fires including the massive Volcano fire in 1960 in the Foresthill area of Tahoe National Forest.

In 1964 Gene went to work for the Human Resources Department of Placer County. He took the position of Community Work and Training Coordinator. Gene retired from Placer County after 33 years of service as the supervisor of the GAIN program. During Gene's years with Placer County he was active in the Sierra Club. Gene led mountaineering outings for the Sierra Club for 17 years. Gene also created the new sport of gorge scrambling and led approximately 500 mountain climbs and gorge scrambles for the Sierra Club. In 1975 Gene was hired by the Placer County School For Adults to develop an outdoor recreation program. He worked for the school district for over 35 years. Gene led trips all over the world, climbing mountains in Alaska and as far away as Russia. He led 14 Arctic expeditions and over 2,500 trips in all.

Gene received the Sierra Club's Outstanding Service award in 1978, and in 1988 he received the Placer County's Search and Rescue Commendation award. In 1991 Gene was presented with an award of merit by the Conference of California Historical Societies. He was also honored that year by the U.S. Marine Corps for his community service work. For many years Gene hosted the U.S. Marine Corps birthday gathering for the Sacramento area. In 1998 he received the Sierra Club Leadership award. In 2013, Gene was honored by the City of Auburn with an embedded sidewalk marker at Central Square. He was also a speaker and member of Placer County Historical Society.

Gene published several books including Bogus Thunder Mountain, Sugar Pine Journals, Sojourning in Rough Country, and Hills of the Coyote. Gene wrote many articles for newspapers, Sierra Club publications, and six articles for Summit Mountaineering Magazine.

Gene set up a youth mountaineering stipend program to train youth in mountaineering skills. He raised money for that fund and also raised funds to support conservation efforts in California and elsewhere. Gene also formed a monument program and marked several remote sights to preserve their historical value. In addition he led explorations of ancient Native American sites in the Southwest and several hundred back country ski expeditions, including several to Yellowstone National Park.

Through his adult life Gene's passion was history, particularly American History. Gene had two areas of focus in American History. He studied the travels and adventures of all the Mountain Men who opened up the American wilderness for migration. He also was intensely interested in what motivated people to leave their native lands and migrate to the United States and then forge into the wilderness to create a new life.

Gene is listed in the sixth edition of 5,000 Personalities of the World and the thirteenth edition of the International Who's Who of America.

Gene was preceded in death by his parents, his sister Darlene Markley Neefe and his stepsister Barbara Frye. Gene is survived by his brother Conrad and his wife Genevieve and children Steven, Sheri, and Connie. Also Darlene Markley Neefe's daughters Susan Bethine and Rose. Local relatives include Gene's halfbrother Homer Frye and his wife Sandy and son Brandon of Elk Grove, California. Also cousin Naoma Hardy and husband James Faulstich of Newcastle, California. Gene also leaves behind countless friends who considered him family.

In lieu of flowers the family has requested that donations be made to the Foresthill Divide Historical Society, P.O. Box 646, Foresthill, CA 95631.

Published in The Auburn Journal on Mar. 31, 2017

Published in The Sacramento Bee on Apr. 2, 2017