

Charles Lewis Welchko, 93

Charles Lewis Welchko, 93, was born June 1, 1912 in Iowa Falls, Iowa, the son of Charles and Emma (Harvey) Welchko.



He went to heaven on Dec. 1, 2005 at his home in Anacortes, Wash.

Following the death of his father in 1920, the family moved to Bonners Ferry, where he played quarterback in high school.

Charles met his lifelong partner, Viola Bertha Houck, while in high school, and their first date was on Valentine's Day in 1930. The couple was later married in 1938.

In 1931, Charles attended the University of Idaho where he also played quarterback for the football team. Following college, Charles worked for Northwest Airlines.

He was an avid pilot who earned his flying lessons by working in the aircraft hangars. Charles not only earned both private and commercial airplane licens-

es, but was a flight instructor, also. He remained in aviation and began work with the FAA. His career included opening control towers at Yakima, Felts, Geiger and SeaTac fields. In 1949 he was selected as the first Tower Chief of SeaTac Airport.

He later served as Tower Chief at Boeing Field. In 1961 the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) Seattle named him Man of the Year. He retired from the FAA in 1975 after 34 years of service.

While working as a tower chief and flight instructor, Charles bought and developed his 30-acre farm in Kent, Wash., raising and selling cattle, chickens and eggs.

He was a co-founder of the Meridian Valley Golf and Country Club. Charles served for 11 years as a board member of the Valley Development Company.

He enjoyed the outdoors and was a member of the Tacoma Mountaineers. Charles was a volunteer for the Mountaineers search and rescue team, earning the distinction of being the oldest climber to conquer all seven major mountain peaks in the Northwest.

After selling the farm, he and Viola moved to Anacortes in 1978, where they purchased a sailboat and enjoyed sailing the San Juans.

Charles was a member of St. Mary's Catholic Church and a lifelong member of the Elks Lodge.

He was preceded in death by his brothers, Lawrence and Cecil Welchko and sister, Avonell Cordes. Charles is survived by his wife Viola;

daughter and son-in-law, Marla and John Hartung of Danville, Calif.; and grandchildren, Luke (13) and Hannah (9) Hartung of Danville, Calif.

Inurnment will be in Bonners Ferry. Arrangements are in the care of Evans Funeral Chapel and Crematory, Anacortes. Share memories of Charles and sign the online guest register at www.evanschapel.com.

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