



Franklin Dr. Steen

Dr. Franklin J. Steen Sr. was born June 22, 1916 in Cyrus, Minnesota to John and Amanda (Sheflo) Steen. He attended schools in Starbuck and Morris. In the Fall of 1935 he entered St. Olaf College. As these were the Depression years, he could not afford to return to college after his successful freshman year. He went back to Morris to work and help support his parents and younger siblings. In 1941 he was the first young man in Stevens County to be drafted into the Army. He trained in California, Washington State and Hawaii. In 1943, while he was on leave from Officers Candidate School, he married his sweetheart Beryl Breckenridge of Morris. They were soon on a train on their way to Alabama. After his completing OCS they did not see each other for 2 years. As a lieutenant in the 28th Division he participated in the Normandy invasion and led his men across France. His division was briefly diverted from war to march through Paris at its liberation, but within 24 hours they were again engaged in battle. In September of 1944, at a forward observation spot near the Siegfried Line, he was wounded by enemy artillery and evacuated back to Paris for treatment. He missed the Battle of the Bulge during this recuperation and when he returned to his unit he saw no familiar faces? his company had experienced virtually 100% casualties. In the final months of WWII he fought in the Alsace region and chased the Nazis from the town of Gunsbach?home of Dr. Albert Schweitzer. The villagers welcomed his platoon. They fed them and he had a restful night sleeping on a featherbed? but didn?t take off his boots. He was awarded 2 Purple Hearts, A Bronze Star

and other medals: including a citation from the country of France for his heroic services. Many war memories haunted him, but 60- some years later he tearfully recalled his experiences as citizen soldier proud to serve. After the war, he entered the University of Minnesota School of Dentistry and graduated in 1950. He and his wife and three children (Kathryn, Nancy, and Frank, Jr.) settled in Alexandria where he practiced his gentle art of dentistry for 35 years. Frank enjoyed the fellowship in Kiwanis, Alexandria Country Club, the American Legion and Masonic Lodge. He was a longtime member of First Lutheran Church and for many years taught 8th grade Sunday school. Frank or "Doc Steen" enjoyed his family and family get-togethers at the family cabin on Lake Ida. The breeze was always good and they never owned an air conditioner. May through October was their summer. His prize walleye was caught from a small aluminum rowboat on Ida on a cold November night. As fishing stories go "the ice forming on the fishing poles, around the boat and on the shore got thicker as the years went by, but the nine and a half pound walleye, mounted by Mrs. Plagman, is his remaining witness. The tag says November 25, 1962. Frank and Beryl enjoyed listening and dancing to the Big Band music at the Lakeside Ballroom and the Area Arts concert series. Before memory loss took him so far away he would sing "Enjoy yourself, it's later than you think" and "Dangerous Dan Magrew" and a silly made-up song from his Morris days about Lutefisk. He knew old poems and was good at art which entertained his grandkids. He was proud of his Norwegian heritage and traveled to Norway to visit the towns of his grandparents-one north of Trondheim and another on the Lusterfjord. Frank understood the poverty which led people to leave such beautiful places. He and his wife traveled to warm places in the Winter, but his happiest destination was the cabin, the morning sunrise, pattering all day, and going fishing an hour before sunset. He took care of his family, his patients, his community, and himself, and was forever grateful for the opportunities to work hard, help others, be frugal, and to laugh out loud at some comedian pretending to be a dentist. Dr. Steen was preceded in death by his wife, Beryl, parents, two sisters-Gladys and Marion,

a brother, Leland. He is survived by sister, Madeleine, and brother, Lester, three children: Kathryn (Bill) Raines of Rohnert Park, CA, Nancy (Gary) Ekdahl of Alexandria, MN, Dr. Frank Steen, Jr. (Lisa Habeck) of St. Paul, MN; nine grandchildren: Adam Raines, Heather Hackamack, Marisa Wessel, Sarah Geris, Alisa Hvezda, Erik, Jeffrey, Fiona, and Lara Steen; six great grandchildren: Carsten, Miah, Adam Jr., Reese, Chase, and Violet.