



Carl T. Furniss

August 11, 1920 - January 3, 2013

Carl T. Furniss, most recently of Bloomfield, passed away there peacefully on Thursday, January 3 after a brief illness. Mr. Furniss was born August 11, 1920 in Spruce Grove, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. He was the first surviving son and second child in a family which ran a mill and subsistence farm on the banks of Octoraro Creek's west branch. Responsibility came early to Carl. When he was five his father, also Carl Furniss, was killed in a mill accident, so he tucked in his thumbs to milk the cows, sold muskrat skins, and became man of the family, a role he wouldn't give up for the next 87 years. At age fifteen he took on the job of Sunday-school superintendent at Union Presbyterian Church. At sixteen, peddling Zook Brothers chickenfeed to pay tuition, he enrolled at Millersville State Teachers College. By twenty he was teaching shop in Hilton Village, Virginia, and at 21 – now working as a shipyard draftsman in wartime Newport News – he married his beautiful college sweetheart, Carolyn Hall, of York, PA.

Carl and Carolyn set up house on the James River, and started their family with Carl Thomas, Jr. in April, 1943. When Carl senior joined the Navy and was off to the Pacific, Carolyn and baby returned north to Lancaster. There, after the war, Carl began a career in life insurance, and soon -- January, 1947 -- Constance Virginia joined the family.

Next, Carl's work took the family to suburban Philadelphia, where the Furnisses grew to six, adding Markel in Lansdowne (April, 1948) and Philip in Swarthmore (December, 1954). Then, in 1957, Connecticut General Life

called the precocious Carl to the home office in Hartford to become assistant vice president of agencies. The family settled in at 47 Concord Street, West Hartford. In the late 1950s Carl took over as manager of Connecticut General's Hartford Agency, and it was as its leader that he made his mark on the life insurance business. Using innovative techniques to hire and teach his personnel, he put together a group dedicated to the "Serve-First" philosophy of Stuart Smith, Carl's mentor in Philadelphia, a man whose portrait hung on the wall wherever Carl lived. Under Carl's guidance The Hartford Agency was in the vanguard of an industry-wide transformation toward broadened financial services, and it consistently topped the list of CG's producers. Businessman Carl was also integrally involved in the community and the lives of his kids. He taught Sunday school and did multiple terms, with Carolyn, as PTA leader. Later, he was elected President of the Hartford Golf Club, served as Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Hartford Seminary, and volunteered as a member in the Retired Executives Corps. After Carl left his agency in the mid-80s, he and Carolyn began spending their winters in Kona, Hawaii, and they took great pleasure in providing yearly vacations for their children and grandchildren. Then, when Carolyn began suffering from Alzheimer's disease, Carl and she moved to Duncaster Retirement Community in Bloomfield, where he cared for her until her death in October, 2012.

Carl Furniss was a man the world admired. His smile was the power light of a deep and quiet consciousness – the kind we're lucky to encounter once or twice in a lifetime. Babies knew it: he was famous for calming their fuss. Carl assumed responsibility for himself and others as a boy on Octoraro Creek and stayed busy for the rest of his life: providing, teaching, managing, leading. He was a 71-year constant in the life of Carolyn: loving husband, companion, care-giver. A tow-headed, chore-sharing brainchild brother to sisters Helen and Laura. The Best Man in the lives of his children, whom he taught to wash the dishes and to say nothing about others if wasn't something nice. A superhero and sage to nine grandchildren, all of whom he sent to college. And – no doubt – a legendary old guy in the future stories of his growing group

(currently six) of great-grandchildren. At the end, when his work was done and he was tired, he decided to lie down and go to sleep. That was the way he wanted it. His family and friends are happy that, as usual, he managed to get his way. Those who would like to help Carl's family celebrate his life are invited to visit with them at the Hartford Golf Club on Saturday, January 12, beginning at noon.