

Leo W. Dorsey

Aug 30, 1923 - Apr 22, 2017

Leo W. Dorsey, of Grand Junction, Colorado, passed away at his home on April 22, 2017. He spent his career flying planes, both in the military and commercially. Originally from Iowa, he was an avid outdoorsman. He enjoyed many activities in the area where he resided, including golfing, skiing and boating. He is survived by his wife, Naomi, his two children, Michael, and Colleen, and his grandchildren, Jackson, Quentin, Kaitlin, and Austin.

Leo was born on a farm in Swaledale, Iowa on August 30, 1923 to parents Vera and Joseph Dorsey. He was the third child born following sister Mary Kay and brother Jack. His youth was spent on the farm and though it was during the depression it was actually a somewhat idyllic upbringing. During those lean years his family never lacked for food.

In 1941, following the Pearl Harbor attack and the US entrance into WWII, Leo graduated from high school. He was too young to enlist but Washington was looking for typists. So off he went to the State Department in D.C., where he worked as a typist in a building just next door to the Whitehouse. He was thrilled to be making \$135 a month, which was big money at that time.

Leo signed up for Navy Flight Training in December of 1942. A glitch involving lost military records delayed his start of flight training until 1943 when, in Norman, Oklahoma, he started training in his first plane, which was the bi-wing Stearman. In 1943 and 1944 Leo could be found Barnstorming in Northern Iowa and Southern Minnesota where he would perform flying stunts at the local fairs and other venues. Stunt pilots performing tricks was a popular form of entertainment that began in the Roaring Twenties. Leo and his Stearman did not disappoint.

Leo continued training in several planes but in the winter of 1945-1946 he spent time in the Corsair Fighter Squadron. After the war ended Leo returned to Iowa while waiting for his military papers to come through. He ended up visiting his sister who was living in Denver. That led to a life changing decision for him, as he decided to move to Colorado and enroll at the University of Denver.

While in Denver Leo met Jo Anne Chapal and they were married February 18, 1950. While Leo attended college he was also serving in the reserves. The couple soon moved to Alameda, CA where Leo continued with his flight training. His squadron was finally called up and Leo went to Korea where he served from September 1951 until June 1952 as a Navy fighter pilot. On October 25, 1951 Leo was shot down over the Sea of Japan in his F4U Corsair. Fortunately he was rescued promptly but the traumatic event remained a major life event for him and one he would never forget.

In 1954 Leo was discharged from the military but remained in the reserves. His son Michael David was also born that year while the couple was living in Minnesota. The family soon found themselves back in Colorado when Leo started working for the original Frontier Airlines, where he would continue to work until his retirement 28 years later.

A daughter, Colleen Kay, was born to the couple in July 1957. The family resided in Wheatridge, CO. During this time Leo really embraced the Colorado outdoors, especially skiing, and golfing. All new activities for a young man from Iowa. In 1961, following a divorce, Leo moved to Aurora and continued to fly for Frontier Airlines. The following years were full of travel and outdoor activities.

In 1979, Leo met his current wife, Naomi Adams, who was a nurse at St. Joseph's Hospital in Denver. She was originally from England and had come to the US after the war. In August, 1983, Leo retired from Frontier Airlines after 28 years of service. Leo and Naomi married May 4, 1991 and continued to live in Aurora.

In 1992, after many years traveling all over the western United States in their RV, Leo and Naomi moved across the state to Grand Junction, CO. Leo continued golfing and skiing and they both enjoyed the Grand Junction area. They had a shared love of dogs and throughout their marriage they owned many.

Leo seemed not to stress about anything, which we believe was a key to his longevity. He loved telling a joke and really did like to laugh. After a long battle with Parkinson's Disease, Leo passed away at home on April 22, 2017. We believe he would say it was a life well lived. He will be missed. Leo is survived by his wife, Naomi, his 2 children, Michael and Colleen, as well as his grandchildren: Michael's children: Jackson and Quentin; Colleen's children: Kaitlin and Austin; Naomi's granddaughter: Tyler.