William F. (Bill) Sampson passed away at his home in Scotts Valley after a brief illness on Sunday, March 23, 2014, in the presence of family. Bill is survived by his son, W. Frederick Sampson, of Aptos; his daughter, Carol Sampson Rudisill, and son-in-law Jeff Rudisill, of Sierra Madre, CA; six grandchildren, and a great-granddaughter. He was preceded in death by his wife of 60 years, Elizabeth C. Sampson, on August 22, 2011.

Bill Sampson had a distinguished career as scientist and aerospace systems engineer, specializing in orbital mechanics. Bill graduated with a B.S. in Physics from CalTech in 1951, and immediately went to work testing missiles at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, CA. Bill developed the tracking system for Explorer I, the U.S.’s first satellite; created technology that made GPS navigation possible; and led satellite control teams for numerous intelligence satellite systems through the decades of the Cold War at The Aerospace Corporation, G.E. Space Systems, and a series of consulting engagements. Only a few of the programs Bill led are unclassified; he was justifiably proud of the contributions he made to the safety and security of his country. Bill also enjoyed sailing, and was a member of Santa Cruz Yacht Club.