Robert Gerson Metzner

February 11, 1917 - December 21, 2014 Entrepreneur, inventor and artist Robert Gerson Metzner died peacefully of natural causes on December 21, 2014 at home in Beverly Hills. Bob was born on February 11, 1917 in Detroit, Michigan. His father Abraham Metzner was a pediatrician. His mother Vera Pollaromy Metzner was a nutritional specialist. The family moved to Los Angeles when he was 4. He soon became a technological prodigy building his first crystal radio at age 9 and obtaining a ham radio license and First Class Radio Telephone license at 16. Working in electronics to pay for his education, Bob earned a degree in electrical engineering at Caltech in 1938. He married his beloved wife Esther in 1940. With her help as his secretary until their children started arriving, his career spanned the growth of the audio industry and he played a significant role in it. He patented numerous inventions in many audio formats, disk and tape. His first successful company Pacific Sound made playback equipment for the army during WWII. In 1947 he founded Califone Corporation, which serves the needs of educators and other professionals by providing audiovisual recording and playback equipment for schools and industry. In addition, he began Roberts Recorders with Robert Craig, and formed one of the earliest successful partnerships between an American and Japanese (Akai) electronics company. His Metzner Starlight Turntable is still praised and collected by audiophiles. He retired from business at age 42, but was far from finished with inventing and creating. He had studied sculpting in his spare time and was now able to pursue a new career as a sculptor living in Beverly Hills. His works in cast iron, bronze, fiberglass and other media are on display at UCLA, Caltech and in private collections. While "retired" from business, Bob also patented the first modern gas/electric hybrid automobile in 1982 with Gerald Fields. When they presented a working prototype to the big three automakers in Detroit, they were told that the idea would never succeed. The Prius and other hybrids were introduced not long after their historic patent expired. Their prototype is now in the Petersen Automotive Museum in Los Angeles. Bob's favorite pastime for most of his adult life was sailing. He owned many boats and won innumerable prizes and trophies racing on the Pacific Ocean. As with all of the other activities mentioned above, he attributed much of his success on land and sea to his engineering training at Caltech. Unlike Thomas Edison, on whose 70th birthday he was born, Bob was an inventor and businessman whose family was an important part of his life. He and Esther were happily married for almost 75 years. In addition to Esther, he is survived by his two adult children: Richard Metzner (Judy Davenport) and Carolee Goldberg (Edward Goldberg), four grandchildren: Jeffrey Metzner (Elise DiCarlo), David Metzner (Ariane Metzner) Jamie Goldberg, and Katie Hemphill (Charles Hemphill), and nine great-grandchildren. Bob achieved all that he did and yet never stopped being a kind, humble, loving human being with a great sense of humor. The family will be holding a private memorial service at home and asks that in lieu of flowers contributions in Bob's honor be sent to Caltech, MC 5-32, Pasadena, CA 91125.

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