Norman H. Caldwell 1916 - 2013, Santa Barbara

May 16, 1916—Oct 18, 2013, Colonel, Air Force Reserve, Retired. A man of great integrity. Former Santa Barbara County Public Works Director, member of and engineer for the SB Historic Trust, spent most of his adult life in civil and community service. He is survived by his wife, Ruth and daughters Margie Caldwell Cooper (Cameron Cooper, Carissa & Ross Cooper) of Ketchum, ID and Jean Caldwell of Olympia, WA. He was one of the Great Generation, having grown up in the Depression and fought in World War II: Norman saw our world change in a big way over his 97 years. He was smart, funny and thoughtful. Born in Frankfurt, Indiana May 16, 1916, he came to California with his family in the early 1920’s, and he was 9 at the time of the Santa Barbara earthquake of 1925. He had vivid memories of the earthquake, among them was the ripple created by the shock wave as it passed through the façade of SBHS across from their Anapamu Street home. He was the first in his family to have a specialized higher education, graduating UC Berkeley with honors as a Civil Engineer in 1940. Under the auspices of the Army Air Corps, he received a double Masters Degree in Meteorology. Upon graduation he was commissioned as a lieutenant in the Army Air Force. Ruth Kuns and Norman Caldwell were married in Montecito on Dec 6, 1941. The next morning, driving away on their honeymoon, the newlyweds heard about the attack on Pearl Harbor on the radio. His career as a military officer began in Tucson, AZ, and ended at the close of the War in India, Burma and China. Beginning as a weather officer (forecaster,) Caldwell became a pilot, and later, Assistant Regional Control Officer, Third Weather Region, stationed in San Antonio, TX. His overseas tour was in a CBI assigned to General Tunner as staff weather officer. Caldwell was one of the pilots and weather officers who flew supplies from Burma to China over the Himalayas, known as “Flying the Hump.” He also maintained his active Reserve status and retired in 1976 as a Colonel. Norm and wife Ruth returned to Santa Barbara after World War II, when he began to work for the new Public Works Department, just as the housing boom of the 50’s began. He designed and built his home on the Riviera to leave their oak grove intact as they nestled it into the trees. During Norm’s 27+ years as Santa Barbara County Public Works Director, many public buildings were built, rebuilt, or remodeled, including the challenge of remodeling the historic County Court House. Some of his favorite projects were the recreational areas at Lake Cachuma. He headed the County Water Agency from 1959-1975 and was Staff Engineer from 1967-1975. Flood Control was part of Public Works at the time, and Norm used to get up in the middle of the night to help sandbag the creeks during heavy rains. After retiring from Santa Barbara County in 1976, Norman shared his engineering expertise with many local architects and engineers. His long career and experience helped to flesh out local history and solve restoration problems. Serving on the restoration committee of the Santa Barbara Trust for Historic Preservation, he provided the expertise needed. Not idle in retirement, among the projects Caldwell enjoyed was engineering the refurbishment of roads and bridges for the Sandpiper Golf Course, Paso Robles and La Purisima golf courses in the 1980’s. Norman received many honors and awards in his lifetime, richly deserved. One was the Order of the Flying Cloud, from the Chinese government, and the California State Park Association’s Volunteer of the Year for 18 years of service. He was given accolades just last April at the Presidio Chapel by the SB Trust for Historic Preservation. He is fondly remembered as a rock of support, advice and adventure for his daughters. Experiences like learning to ride a bike, the family camping trips to the Sierras, fly fishing, backpacking, flying or sailing taught them to love to travel the mountains and the world as he did. He continued backpacking with favorite friends into his 70’s, including climbing Mount Whitney and making special snow cones on beautiful Sierra summits. He is now where the forecast is a weatherman’s dream: Clear Air, Visibility Unlimited (CAVU.)