



## Delmar L Olson

April 12, 2022

Delmar L. Olson passed away on April 12th, 2022, in Seattle. He was 89 years old.

Delmar served a tour of duty in the Philippines, spent 12 years as a draftsman for the Boeing Aircraft Company, and worked at Stan's Gun Shop in Seattle for over 30 years. He was passionate about guns, photography, and archiving family history - including his own, allowing much of his story to be told in his own words.

"Every life has a few scraps left over for the latecomers to wonder about. These are but a few that have come my way."

Delmar was born on December 23rd, 1932, in a "rough old farmhouse" near Toppenish. A poultry brooder house served as his bedroom during his high school years. "It had only three-quarter inches of wood and a single layer of tarpaper between me and the winter cold of the Yakima Valley. ... Times were tough in the 1930s, and our parents moved several times before my fifth birthday and several times more before I graduated high school."

He grew up with his sister Jean and his uncle Darrel, attending Harrah Grade School. As a farmboy, eating watermelon was a favorite pastime.

Delmar loved animals, including Pug the farm dog, and he was never without a cat. This love for animals also extended to "the best bull my father ever owned":

"My father had gotten the bull as a yearling and raised him to a useful maturity. The bull was of a very friendly nature and could be handled easily. If he was in the pasture and spotted a human, he would raise his tail and approach at a gallop. This, as might be expected, would cause some nervousness among strangers who didn't know that the bull simply wanted to be petted. He loved people. He would stop near the object of his affections and turn sideways in the hope that his back would get a good scratching. I'd usually pick up a small stick and use it to scratch his back ... vigorously. He'd grunt, groan and swap sides so you could scratch everything. He was much like a friendly dog who wants attention."

Delmar was drafted in 1953 and did his basic and school company time in San Luis Obispo, California. "I shipped out on a Military Sea Transport rust bucket and arrived in the Philippines late in that same year. I reported to Clark Air Force Base and was then assigned to a detached unit at Camp O'Donnell. I had been assigned to an Army Command and Administrative Network (ACAN) station ... one of 12 such stations in the world at that time."

Pvt. First Class Delmar L. Olson of the U.S. Army Signal Corp. was "laughingly called company armorer." "I got to shoot all the nice goodies that our outfit had. That included the Colt .45 Caliber Pistol, the .30 Caliber M-2 Carbine, the .45 Caliber M-3 SMG, and the Thompson SMG. It's not that I knew all about these guns, but I did know something about them ... and besides, they didn't know what else to make of me."

Delmar returned from the Army in December of 1954 and began classes at Washington State College. "Shortly afterward I had been hospitalized with

rheumatic fever and had been forced to drop out of class. I spent that summer in pursuit of whatever struck my fancy. I'd begun playing with photography, which soon became an off-and-on pastime and lasting for the next 45 years."

In the fall of 1955, he tried classes in Pullman again. "The monthly allowance under the GI bill was, in my case at least, \$110. This was to cover tuition, books, supplies, and food. It wasn't enough and I needed money badly. I signed up with the forest service as a fire lookout for the summer of 1956.

"Perry Bastrom thought it would be nice to take a nice long drive so he drove me from the Yakima Valley to Colville. We did a little sightseeing along the way and, eventually, we arrived at Colville where I reported for duty. I was first sent to fire school at a logging camp run by the Diamond Match Company. I do remember that they fed very well there ... very, very well.

"Next, I spent a week or so doing odd jobs with the packer. He was a school teacher who worked as a mule packer in the summers. I was finally assigned to the lookout tower on Old Dominion Mountain and the packer delivered me there on horseback. Having finally gotten to my tower, I was socked in solid for two weeks. The fog barely let me see the ground under the tower. Luckily, previous occupants of the tower had thoughtfully left a large supply of magazines in the overhead. There was a great deal of information about the buildup for WW-II in all those 1930s vintage magazines."

A firefinder was among the instruments he used, with which, "if the lookout has taken his readings and drawn his charts properly, he would be able to locate a fire on the map even in the dark."

"I saw only eight people, other than the packer, while I was on the tower. That made it nice."

Despite any reclusive nature implied by that statement, the Perry Bastrom he mentions was one of his lifelong friends:

"I first met Perry when he began attending Harrah Grade School in the seventh grade. That would have been late in 1944. We were both the sons of small farmers, as were most of the students at Harrah, but we were both low in the social pecking order and became fast friends. Though our paths diverged in later years we maintained the friendship, visiting and corresponding until his death. He was in Seattle for a visit only two weeks before he died."

Delmar began his career as a Boeing draftsman in the early summer of 1957 and ended in the late fall of 1969. During that time, he worked on a variety of projects including the 707, Hydrofoil, and Lunar Orbiter.

On the 707 project, he saw the first production model of the 707 in its initial takeoff run. The Hydrofoil and Lunar Orbiter projects were both at the old Ford Plant that Boeing was using in the 1960s. "Oddly enough, the selective service was using that very same building in the early 1950s and I reported there for my pre-induction physical checkup."

On the Lunar Orbiter, he worked mainly on the camera's protective housing. His work on the Hydrofoil project included the engineer's station, the life raft canisters, life rails, and mortar mount on the fantail. "These were relatively small projects and thus rather enjoyable. An engineer would approach a draftsman with a rough sketch on an 8.5 x 11 sheet of paper and tell him to 'draw this dingus and make it look something like this.'"

Delmar ended his time at Boeing with the AWACS Program. "After a long period of doing antenna mount drawings and random cross-section drawings,

I was invited to take a hike along with tens of thousands of other Boeing employees. This was when the famous billboard appeared saying 'Will the last person leaving Seattle please turn out the lights?'"

But Delmar stayed in Seattle, spending over three decades at Stan's Gun Shop. He remained socially active later in life, visited his favorite diner for breakfast daily, and wrote letters regularly to his sister.

To some of the children of his sister, like Jeff Ames (Sr.), who picked him up from the Greyhound Bus Station whenever he'd visit (Delmar didn't drive), he is fondly remembered for fun times at their gravel pit shooting range, and for his exciting experiments with gunpowder.

And to some of his sister's grandchildren, he's remembered for his Christmas visits, his letters, his stories, and memorabilia - scraps left over from "the long ago."

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Delmar is survived by his sister, Jean

# Cemetery Details

## **Pioneer Memorial Gardens**

14403 Rd. 2 Ne  
Moses Lake, WA