

Donald Carlton Burns passed away peacefully at home on March 14, 2017, surrounded by family. Son of Gilbert Burns and Pauline Carpenter, he is survived by his wife of 19 years, Peggy. He is also survived by his daughters Pam Kitagawa (Stalley), Tracy Simpson (Allen), and Hilary Nishiura (Gavin), as well as grandchildren Brandon (Brenda), Shane, and Jared, and great-grandchildren Ella and Oliver. He is also survived by his stepsons Arnold Ting and Adam Ting, and his granddaughters Brittany and Courtney.



Mr. Burns started his career in advocacy with the California State Association of Life Underwriters in 1957. He started his own company OMI Government Relations, Inc, representing many corporations and trade organizations for 50+ years.

With 53 years working the halls of government, Mr. Burns was the “Dean” of the state’s lobby corps when he retired. For 25 years, he served as director and two-term president of the Institute of Governmental Advocates, the association of California’s top legislative advocates. He has held all elective offices in the California and American Society of Association Executives and served for a record setting 36 years as a member of the United States Chamber of Commerce’s “Association Committee of 100.” Mr. Burns was honored by the ASAE as recipient of its highest honor, the “ASAE Key Award.” In 1973, Mr. Burns was asked to create, manage and provide advocacy services as president and chief executive officer of the California Spa and Pool Industry Education Council (SPEC), for which he served until his retirement in 2009. Mr. Burns also served as California’s Deputy Chief of Protocol for eight years under Governor George Deukmejian.

On March 12, 2007, the California State Senate unanimously adopted and presented him with a Senate Resolution extending him “...special honors and the highest commendation for his exemplary record of service to the people of the State of California.” The resolution came on his having achieved 50 years of service to the Legislature as advocate. Co-authored by Republican and Democratic Party leaders in the Senate, it was the first time in the state’s history that a lobbyist was accorded the honor of being invited to being present on the Senate floor while in session, and more significantly, invited to address the Senate following the presentation and speeches made honoring him by present and former members of the Senate present for the occasion.

Born, raised and educated in California (University of Santa Clara and San Francisco School of Law), Mr. Burns served in the U.S. Army during the Korean War. During his following professional career, he also was appointed by the President of Austria as that nation’s Consul General of Austria in San Francisco, serving for 17 years before retiring in 2008. He was decorated twice by the President of Austria for this service. The second decoration presented by Austria’s Ambassador to the United States on that nation’s behalf at his retirement, was its highest civilian award, Austria’s Grand Honor of Merit in Gold.

Mr. Burns was the Chief Warder of the Beefeater Club of the United States, a gourmet society with close ties to the Tower of London. He also served as a Director of Historic Royal Palaces, Inc. He was a

member of the Queen's Club of Northern California, and had been honored as Knight in the Venerable Order of St. John.

In 1997, Mr. Burns married the love of his life Peggy (as he is to her as well). They have spent the past twenty years exploring all corners of the world together.

Mr. Burns had varied interests and hobbies, and always had a gentlemanly manner to him. He found great pleasure in skiing, backpacking, boating, British cars and travel. He was a sharp dresser, loved his martinis, and could always be counted on for his quick wit.

A celebration of Don's life and memorial service will be held on Saturday, May 6th at 1pm, at the Grace Cathedral in San Francisco. In lieu of flowers, the family requests memorial donations be made to any charity of your own choosing in his honor.