

# VETERAN'S CORNER

## Tualatin's Four Sunde Brothers served in three wars, Spanning World War Two, Korean and Vietnam Wars

BY DALE POTTS

Yvonne Addington introduced me to a member of one of Tualatin's early families at the conclusion of our Memorial Day event, Gordon Sunde. Gordon, at 85, is the youngest and only surviving member of four brothers. Very spry for his age, he has an infectious smile that makes you feel happy when you talk to him. The Sunde brothers were next door neighbors and friends of Yvonne's father Ted Saarinen and his brother Bob. The Sunde's lived on the SE Corner of Boones Ferry Road and Avery Streets, where Boones Ferry Community church is now located. Two of the Sunde brothers served in WWII,

one during Korea and Gordon in both Korea and Vietnam. The oldest, Donald, was working as an airplane mechanic for a company building planes in Southern California when Pearl Harbor was attacked. He joined the Army Air Corps and spent four years on different islands in the South Pacific. Fortunately, he was never wounded but did contract several jungle diseases. The second brother, Carroll, was exempted from WWII service because of a physical disability, an injured knee, but was drafted into Army when Korean war started. He was sent to Germany where he worked as a mechanic for the Army vehicles fleet there. Lawrence, the third oldest, went into the Army near the end of WWII, in 1946. He served as an administrative clerk in a medical headquarters unit. The unit was first located in Paris and then moved to Germany for the Occupation of Germany. He was able to tour several nearby countries while in Germany.

Gordon had three years of college when summoned to meet with his local draft board. When they told him was going to be drafted, He told them that he had "a better offer, as an Air Force aviation cadet." By that time, the Army Air Corps had become a separate branch of the U.S. military. After completing flight training, Gordon was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant, at age 24, in 1955. Our country was in the "cold war" stage by that time. He was assigned to the Air Defense Force which was designed to provide a defensive air shield against a possible attack by long-range, manned Soviet bombers. Stationed at Stewart Air Force Base in New York. He flew both jets and propeller driven planes, T33 shooting Star, B25, C47 and F86F fighters. These planes provided radar and air weather service information to bomber and fighter squadrons as well as overseeing weather stations. When not flying, he oversaw plane maintenance records. After active duty,

Gordon continued as a pilot in the Air Force Reserve where he advanced to the rank of Major. He finished college, graduating with a BS in Psychology from Arizona State University. He did graduate work and then went to work as a Probation/Parole Officer for the Tri-County area. He was temporarily activated many times while in the Reserves; flying a C-141 Starlifter (with four jet engines) for the Military Airlift Command, transporting soldiers, equipment, and supplies from McCord Air Force Base to Vietnam and also between Vietnam bases. He returned with body bags, KIA military.

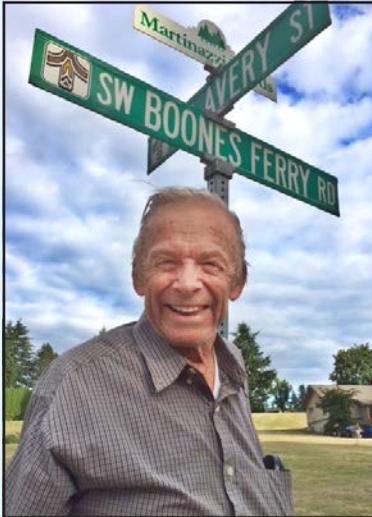
As the Sunde brothers grew up, they were very popular for their singing and instrument musical abilities. First, Don who was eight years older than Gordon, performed solo with a guitar. Then Carroll made it a duet with a violin playing fiddle music. Lawrence joined with a saxophone and Gordon made it a quartet with guitar and banjo-uke. Known as the Sunde Brothers and wearing cowboy outfits with holstered toy pistols, they won talent shows all over the Northwest. They were included in a movie, Running Wild, shot in Oregon. The main theme was the antics of two hobo's who were hopping freight

trains. Gordon remembers watching the stills in Portland before the film was sent to be edited. He said he doubted that the movie won any awards but it was exciting to be part of it. The boys inherited their musical talent from their mother who was an accomplished violinist. Their father was a carpenter. Their parents emigrated as young adults from Norway in the early 1900s. Gordon said his mother rode the Oregon Electric train from Portland to Tualatin to select the farm site for the family. The Sunde's ran a family farm with apple and cherry orchards, black raspberries (used to make die), hay crops and cows and chickens. I asked Gordon if he planned to be buried in Willamette National Cemetery and he said he is going to join two of his brothers, his parents and an uncle in the Sunde family plots at Winona.

**Dale G. Potts** has organized and MC'd Tualatin's Memorial Day observation for the past 13 years. He is a Navy Vietnam vet, serving as the Public Affairs Officer of the Aircraft Carrier USS Yorktown. After active duty, he remained in the reserves, retiring as a Navy Captain (same rank as an Army Colonel). His civilian career was primarily as the Oregon Public Affairs Officer for IRS. Contact Dale at [vet.dale@gmail.com](mailto:vet.dale@gmail.com).



Lieutenant Dale Potts



Gordon on corner of Boones Ferry and Avery. When growing up there, it was not yet inside Tualatin City limits.



Gordon while serving as a Probation/Parole Officer in the 60's.



Sunde Meadows, one of Tualatin's first sub developments in the late 70's.



Gordon practicing with brother Lawrence.



Gordon gave his 1941 Ford to his mother, Clara, when he went into the service.



Pitching hay on family farm.



Newly Commissioned Air Force Second Lieutenant Gordon Sunde.



Air Force Lt Gordon Sunde in his office where plane maintenance records were kept.



The Sunde brothers with other cast members of the movie "Running Wild."



Gordon first's first musical instrument was a piano.