



Dr. Olaf A Boedtger

February 10, 1924 - January 10, 2026

Dr. Olaf Boedtger was born on February 10, 1924 in Colombo, Sri Lanka to parents, Egon and Rosy Boedtger. When he was 5 years old, he and his older brother (Egon) went to live with family friends and relatives in Winterthur, Switzerland to attend school. He enjoyed playing sports including track and team handball, and also participated in Scouts. He met his future wife, Dora Wilhelm, in Scouts and eventually married her in 1952. After he graduated from University in Zurich, they immigrated to the United States, “the land of opportunity”, and first settled in Boston, MA. He worked as a Science Teaching Assistant at MIT. During this time, his first child, Christina, was born. In 1954, he and his family moved to Altadena, CA, where he worked as a Grad Assistant at CalTech while earning his PhD in Physics. During this time his family expanded to include son, Harald, daughter, Beatrice, and son, Eric. In 1962, he moved his family to Berkeley, CA, and took a temporary Professor position at UC Berkeley for one year. In 1963, he moved his family to Corvallis, OR and took a permanent Physics Professor position at Oregon State University. His youngest child, Markus, was born a year later. He also served as the Head Advisor for the College of Science until he retired in 1986. Family was very important to him which included camping, travelling and sports activities. He was very involved with Boy Scouts, and founded the Co-Ed Explorer Scouts at Corvallis High School. He was also the Head Timer for the OSU Track and Field Team, and timed at two Olympic Trials. He attended multiple OSU sporting events, and was an avid Beaver fan. After he retired,

he started coaching U.S. Olympic Team Handball and traveled with the team to several international competitions, including the Seoul Olympics. After his wife passed in 1996, he traveled solo for several years until he met Louise Russell, and they continued travelling together to numerous destinations for over 20 years. He kept his sense of humor throughout, and passed away peacefully on January 10, 2026 (just one month shy of his 102nd birthday).

He is survived by his two daughters, Christina Gerding, and Beatrice Boedtke, and his son, Markus Boedtke. He is also survived by his son-in-law, Robert Gerding, granddaughter, Shannon Starwalt (husband Ryan), and two great granddaughters, Payton and Avery. He also had three nieces, Monika, Marianne, and Susanne, and three nephews, Egon, Olaf, and Martin and families in Switzerland. He was preceded in death by his parents, brother Egon, loving wife Dora Boedtke, and beloved sons, Harald (age 7) and Eric (age 14).

A special thanks to the staff of Good Samaritan Hospital and Evergreen Hospice House in his final week of life. At his request, there will be no formal service. In lieu of flowers, to honor his memory donations may be made in his honor to the OSU Athletic Department, or the Evergreen Hospice House.

He will be greatly missed by his family and friends.

Tribute Wall

JH

“ I remember Dr Boedtke as my head advisor at OSU in the late 1970s. I had a conflict with the dept of microbiology reducing our lab sessions but not reducing our lab fees! I complained to Doc and he was sympathetic and offered an equitable solution. What a great leader. RIP
John H. Class of '79

John Houde - April 09 at 12:03 PM