



Harold Jonasson Nygaard

May 6, 1929 - January 6, 2026

Born May 6, 1929, Harold was very active until his death at the age of 96 on January 6, 2026 in Newberg, Oregon. He was the youngest, and last remaining, of 12 children born to Karen Malena and Jonas Nygaard in Otroya, an island on the southwest coast of Norway. "I can't imagine how my mother felt when she found out she was pregnant at age 48 with her 12th child!"

Harold developed his strong work ethic from being raised on a small farm, known as Nygaarden where all contributed to every aspect of farm life, from raising their own food to making their own clothes. They had no running water and no electricity until 1944 and went through hard times during the depression and the German occupation. "We did not have a doctor or dentist on the island. I did not go to a doctor until I was 15 when I injured my knee. I did not go to a dentist in Norway."

The family was musical, and Harold started playing the accordion when he was about six years old. There were no teachers on the island. "I taught myself as best I could and later on took a correspondence course."

"I had a good life as a child. There were steep hills for skiing and sledding, and we had lots of fun during the long, cold winter. What I remember most was when my Dad and second oldest brother, Konrad, remodeled our house in the summer of 1937. When they put the roof on, we all slept in the barn for

a month.”

When Harold was 18 and working on his married sister Margit's farm, he and his brother, Oskar, and sister, Bjorg, were invited by his mother's brother, Ole, to come to America. Their parents had passed, and the single Norwegian siblings all accepted. Uncle Ole sponsored them by putting up a \$5000 bond at the bank. After undergoing physicals, vaccinations and appointments in Oslo which was required to get a passport, they embarked on the cruise liner, SS Stavangerfjord and took the 6-day trip from Oslo across the Atlantic Ocean to Staten Island in New York where they boarded a train to Seattle. The immigration office made Harold play the accordion he brought with him to prove he knew how. “We did not speak a word of English except Ok.”

Uncle Ole owned a small commercial fishing boat and Harold fished with him off the coast of B.C. and Washington. During the off-season, he attended Broadway High School. He had completed eight years of schooling in Norway.

Harold was drafted into the U.S. Army in January 1951 and reported to Ft. Lewis, Washington, before completing basic training at Camp Roberts, California. While there, he played a rented accordion at the Officer's Club on weekends. When his commanding officer asked him to perform at a party, Harold initially felt he wasn't good enough, but was excused from KP duty to rehearse and went on to play at several parties.

His musical talent ultimately kept him from being sent to Korea during the war. At the end of basic training when he was scheduled for deployment, his officer reassigned him to Germany as a favor for his performances. Having endured five years of occupation in Norway during World War II, Harold had expressed his reluctance to go to Korea. He said he would have returned to Norway rather than join the Army. After a brief stop at Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, he traveled by ship to Germany where he served 18 months at Camp Hanover.

He was honorably discharged in December 1952.

Harold had to live in the U.S. for five years before he could apply for U.S. citizenship. He learned the language and culture, studied and became a U.S. citizen August 10, 1953, the 178th year of U.S. Independence.

Harold moved to Butte, Montana with a friend who wanted to open an accordion studio. The "Lawrence Welk Show" with the grinning accordionist Myron Floren - a child of Norwegian immigrants - was a very popular radio and TV program at the time, and Harold's studio thrived. (Harold later met and entertained with Myron Floren.) It wasn't long before Harold was teaching 40-50 students at the "Viking Accordion Studio" which also rented, sold and repaired accordions. He completed a college preparatory course in 1957 from Butte Business College and provided the music for his graduation ceremony. At a picnic, he met his wife, Pauline Hewitt Cavin, who had a daughter Cathi from a previous marriage. They were married in 1957. Their son, Harold Kenneth, (Ken) was born in 1958. In 1960, he became a Certified Teacher of the American Accordionists' Association, Inc.

Before they were married, Harold told Pauline that he didn't want to make Butte his home as he didn't like the long, cold winters. Butte was a strong union mining town and when the minors went on a nine-month strike in 1959, the studio suffered. The family moved to a rental home in Seattle in 1960. Harold provided for his family as a deep-sea halibut fisherman for 32 years before he retired from this dangerous occupation at the age of 63. He fished on smaller vessels in the Gulf of Alaska and spent 15 years on the Alrita.

In the 80's, Harold built a home on property he purchased down the street from where they lived in the north end of Seattle and made an apartment downstairs for Pauline's mother, Jennie Hewitt, who moved there from Butte in

1985. When Jennie later moved to Oregon in 1998 to be closer to granddaughter Cathi and her family, Harold and Pauline enjoyed monthly trips to visit them.

In 1997, Harold was elected life membership in Leif Erickson Lodge 2-001, Sons of Norway for his faithful service. In 2013, the Lodge awarded him "Man of the Year". He taught accordion in his home, and entertained at local events, often with his small band, "The Nygaard Trio" or violinist Juanita Holmes. In the 90's, Harold spent several summers in Alaska working to entertain cruise ship visitors at Denali Princess Lodge. He enjoyed traveling especially to the accordion festival in Kimberly, Canada, and to visit family in Montana. He really liked to, "just get in my car and drive".

Harold and Pauline sold their home in 2017 and moved within walking distance to their Newberg family including great-grandchildren (Charlotte, Clara and Ruby). When Pauline passed away in 2019, they had been married for 62 years. Harold continued his regular playing job at Friendsview Memory Care unit until about a year before he passed away. He would say that the accordion "kept him going". He enjoyed watching politics and football, especially the Seahawks, and good food. He looked forward to Sundays when he could worship and spend time with his friends at Zion Lutheran Church.

Pauline, Ken, Cathi and Jennifer were able to visit Harold's scenic home country with him to meet his loving family and enjoy their wonderful food. He had a special last visit to Norway when he was 90 with his dear friend, Royal Reinsch.

Harold lived his long life with faith, purpose and unwavering commitment to those he loved. He is survived by son, Ken Nygaard, granddaughters Alexandra Jemmings and Samantha Nygaard of Butte, MT; and step family:

daughter Cathi (Jack) Reardon of Newberg, grandchildren—Justin McLean of Tigard, OR, Jennifer (Matt) Domes of Newberg, Rhonda (Tim) Quayle of Port Ludlow, WA, Brad (Toni) Reardon of Boise, ID, 2 greatgrandchildren, 9 step great-grandchildren. A graveside service will be held in Butte, Montana, later this summer. In memory of Harold...enjoy the music in your life “to keep you going”.

Tribute Wall

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“ Harold was my accordion teacher in Butte, Mt. I think I am one of the few who continue to play. He and I played duets in Kimberley, BC Canada when he attended. He also joined me at one of my Families reunions for some jamming and he told me he was proud of me for continuing in music. He was very good friends with my parents Mike and Marge Hanson who lived in Ramsay, Mt. He would always try to stop and visit on his way to and from Butte. He will always be at the top of the list for being a great person and a wonderful influence in my life, Thank you Harold. My sincere condolences to the family. Mike Hanson Missoula, Mt.

Mike Hanson - June 28 at 04:16 PM