

Obituary: Ray Lester had a passion for farming, storytelling  
The Almaden Resident, September 20, 2007

Ray Lester loved the simple things in life. He was happiest at his ranch in San Jose, spending time with his family and doing community outreach as a long-time member and past president of the Almaden Rotary Club.

On Aug. 25, Lester, 87, died with his family by his side.

“His routine up to a few days before he died was to get up early, up with the chickens at 4:30 a.m., fix breakfast for my mom, and head out to the ranch,” says Lester’s son Fred Lester. “Dad was happiest in the midst of agriculture.”

Ray Lester and his family owned and operated ranches that stretched from Willow Glen to Coyote Valley.

The Lester family’s story dates back to 1883 when Lester’s grandfather Nathan Lester, purchased his first prune orchard in San Jose. Lester was born and raised in the midst of the valley’s fruit boom on the family’s “Home Ranch” on Almaden Road.

Lester’s love of agriculture and history along with his storytelling and friendliness were infectious.

His son said his dad remembered everything, from the classmates in his third-grade class to the numbers his football teammates wore at San Jose State College during his years as a player from 1937-39.

Lester formed “Lester Brothers” with his brother, Lee, and the family became one of the Valley’s largest orchardists and fruit processors, his wife said.

Ray Lester is survived by his wife, Grace, his two children Fred Lester and Jean Denning, and granddaughters, Sarah McCaughey, Ashley and Courtney Lester.