OBITUARY: MARTIN JAMES VOTAW, SR.

Martin James Votaw, Sr., pioneer in the communications satellite industry, passed away in Santa Barbara, California on August 6, 2015 at the age of 89. He was born in St. Louis, Missouri to Flora Wharton Votaw and Martin James Votaw on October 2, 1925. He attended the University of Virginia and graduated with a degree in Electrical Engineering in 1946. After graduation, he became a scientist at the Naval Research Laboratory. In 1963, he joined the newly commissioned Communications Satellite Corporation (COMSAT). He later worked with Satellite Business Systems (SBS), and International Maritime Satellite (INMARSAT) in London. He retired from INMARSAT in 1983.

During his career at NRL, he was on the design team for the Vanguard Satellite, the first US satellite in space. He received the Distinguished Civilian Service Award for his successful direction of satellite designs and development of satellite techniques with the GRAB and LOFTI 1 satellites.

Martin married Merna Rae Anderson in September of 1948, and they had six children. He enjoyed making wooden toys for his children and grandchildren, and continued wood working throughout his adult life, crafting furniture and gadgets for the home. His favorite pastime was sailing, and he often took his family, friends and colleagues sailing on his CAL 30 off the coast of Southern California and in the Chesapeake Bay.

He is preceded in death by his mother and father, and his sisters Mary Votaw Parrish and Ruth Votaw. He is survived by Merna Votaw and their children, James A. Votaw, Martin J. Votaw Jr., Thomas C. Votaw, Elizabeth Votaw Loux, Janet L. Votaw, and Mary I. Smith. He is also survived by his brother Charles Votaw.

Services will be held on Sept. 12, 2015 at 1:00 pm at Goleta Presbyterian Church, 6067 E. Shirrell Way, Goleta, CA 93117.

RVSP to MartinVotawMemorial@gmail.com if you plan to attend the service or wish to leave comments for the family.