



Arthur "Steele" Becker

May 15, 1939 - June 18, 2019

Arthur "Steele" Becker, 80
Kearney resident

Arthur "Steele" Becker, 80 of Kearney died Tuesday, June 18, 2019 at his home. Private family services will be held at a later date.

Memorials are suggested to the Kearney Area Animal Shelter. Condolences may be shared online at www.osrfh.com. Services are entrusted to O'Brien Straatmann Redinger Funeral and Cremation Services.

Arthur "Steele" Becker was born May 15, 1939 in Lawrence, Kansas to Ann Margaret Becker and grew up in Clinton and Lawrence, Kansas. He graduated from Lawrence High School in 1957. He received his undergraduate degree from the University of Kansas in 1962 and received his master's degree from Indiana State University in 1964.

Steele was united in marriage to the love of his life June Carol Flesner at their home in Kearney December 16, 2006.

He was a professor at UNK for 43 years in the Geography Department. Steele began his career teaching Russian geography and ended teaching atmosphere, meteorology, and natural disasters, which he dearly loved. He

received many awards during his professional career, published books, and wrote many research articles; however, what he loved most was teaching and mentoring students. Always proud of the students whose lives he had touched on their career paths. His loyalty and length of service to UNK entitled him to become the mace carrier at graduation ceremonies which made him so very proud. In the early 1970's, he directed the NASA moon rock exhibit at KSC. From 1979-1988, he was president of Kearney Little League. He changed the program by eliminating tryouts, so every child had a chance to play, including girls. An All-Star Game bears his name.

As an avid outdoorsman, hunter, and fisherman, one of Steele's greatest loves was the Platte River of which he wrote many essays. In 1983, he began charting detailed maps of the 41 mile stretch of the river from West of Elm Creek, NE to the Interstate 80 interchange at Shelton, NE. By 1985, he and a research team had completed a total of 12 detailed maps covering a 112-mile stretch from Gothenburg, NE to Grand Island, NE running through Dawson, Buffalo, and Hall counties.

Steele also enjoyed woodworking, gardening, bird watching, and antiques; but most of all his kitty cats and puppy dog. He was an avid supporter of the Kearney Area Animal Shelter; he had a real soft spot for animals.

Left to cherish his memory is his beloved wife, June; son, Bill Becker; daughter-in-law and son-in-law Brandy and Mike Smith; daughter-in-law and son-in-law, Karina and Peter Boatright; daughter-in-law, Belinda Becker; and 10 grandchildren, William Jr. (Buzz), Benjamin, Baylor, Bryce, Brook, and Jonathan Becker, Faith Sumpter, Mathew and Emily Smith, Tabitha Friesen; and 2 great-grandchildren, Charlei and Brilei Sumpter.

He was preceded in death by his son, Michael Becker and his mother, Ann Margaret Becker.

Tribute Wall



“ Arthur "Steele" Becker

January 28, 2023 at 08:01 AM

HF

One of the few men I truly respected in my life. I will never forget him, or the honor and integrity he displayed and taught me.

Howard E Frear - June 06, 2024 at 12:00 AM

LF

“ *Dr. Becker was one of my favorite professors at KSC/UNK. It sounds cliché, but he truly cared about his students. I often tell people about him. I was in a fairly serious car crash in October 1991. I had a broken right hand and was right-handed. Taking notes after surgery was a challenge to keep up writing with my left hand. All of my professors were quite accommodating by making copies of their notes for me...except one. When Dr. Becker asked me how I was doing, I mentioned that I was doing well with the exception of one class. He asked which one and why. Within moments he and I went to visit the professor together. He was not mean, but he was extremely persuading. I had copies of notes for that class for the rest of the semester. 😊 He helped shape how I treated and loved my students. I think about him often. He is one of the reasons I had an emphasis in geography. I loved his classes. I am so sorry to read about his passing. I am grateful to have been one of his students.*

Linda (Tiede) Fittje - January 26, 2021 at 11:53 AM

MM

“ When I first arrived at UNK I hardly knew anyone and didn't know anybody in the Geography Department. The first year I didn't know Steele very well and I think in some ways he was trying to test me to see if I really wanted to tough things out at Kearney. I have many images of him that first year; not necessarily remembering what was said but just being around him. My second year at Kearney I had some tough classes which were giving me a real headache of a time. He really took the time to talk to me and I would visit him many times in his office. He got me started on a project of which I really took a liking too on development of the 2nd Avenue corridor. During my last year I had the opportunity to intern at a Natural Resources District (NRD) which he was a big part of in me receiving. Today I work at the Lower Elkhorn NRD in Norfolk, NE. During the internship I needed a place to live and it just so happened he had a rental home he needed to have occupied for the summer. He had much patience in me learning how to operate a gas stove! Steele was a great friend and always had the student's best interests at heart. He always welcomed you at his home to discuss important things or just to visit. Steele had the ability to talk to the students at a personal level. He always made you feel at ease if you were unsure about something or didn't know the right way to go about a problem. He was a great friend and will be missed by myself and many people.

Mike Murphy

Mike Murphy - July 07, 2019 at 04:18 PM

JF

Thanks for sharing Mike.

June C Flesner-Becker - July 09, 2019 at 10:50 PM

DS

“ I happened into a Russian class by accident with Steel as my instructor. I was absolutely amazed by the slide presentations and his love for teaching. Over twenty five years later I still fondly remember not only that class, but the friendship we had while I lived in Kearney. Gods Peace Steel. Don Sickels Arlington, Texas

Don Sickels - June 21, 2019 at 11:55 PM

JF

Thanks for sharing this memory Don, June

June C Flesner-Becker - June 22, 2019 at 03:08 PM

AB

Steele was a great inspiration for me as I grew up. Steele hired me to mow his lawn when I was in sixth grade and let me continue to mow his lawn through my senior year at Kearney High. As a Freshman at the University of Nebraska at Kearney Steele provided me insights into the opportunities for individuals to pursue natural resource management as a career. Steele also highlighted the importance of combining both the biotic and abiotic sciences to develop viable natural resource management solutions. As a result of his guidance and mentoring I acquired both BS and MS degrees from University of Nebraska at Kearney. As a committee member on my Masters Thesis his support ensured I was able to use Geographical Information System technology as part of my project. Without exposure to this technology I would have not got my first job nor be in the position I am today. I owe a debt of gratitude to Steele for the support, friendship, and mentoring that he provided me personally and professionally.

Andy Bishop

Andy Bishop - June 25, 2019 at 10:43 AM

JF

Thanks for sharing this memory Andy, he really loved to see his students succeed.

June C Flesner-Becker - June 25, 2019 at 05:06 PM

MT

I happened to find Mr. Becker's obit in Legacy.com. Mr. Becker was the greatest. He made the subject material come alive so that we can apply it to our lives. I was his student in 1982 and will always have fond memories of him and his kind spirit. My sincerest condolences to his family

Matt Thompson - November 29, 2022 at 09:59 PM