



Mel K. Shoemaker

June 22, 1947 - May 25, 2016

Mel K. Shoemaker, 68, of Kearney, died Wednesday, May 25, 2016 at his home.

Funeral services will be at 10:30 am Tuesday, May 31st at First United Methodist Church. The Reverend Gary Main will officiate. Interment will be in the Kearney Cemetery. Visitation will be Monday from 5-7 pm at O'Brien Straatmann Redinger Funeral Home.

Memorials are suggested to First United Methodist Church, Merryman Performing Arts Center or Crane River Theatre. Condolences may be shared online at www.osrfh.com.

Melvin Kenneth Shoemaker was born on June 22, 1947 in Broken Bow, Nebraska to Ross and Hazel I. (Sorensen) Shoemaker. He grew up near Ansley, Nebraska and graduated from Ansley High School in 1965. Following high school, he attended Kearney State College, graduating in 1968.

On June 9, 1967 Mel was united in marriage to Arlene Kleeb in Broken Bow, Nebraska. The couple made their home in Scotia where he taught Speech and Theatre at North Loup-Scotia High School for 26 years. Mel and Arlene moved to Kearney in 1994 where he would continue his teaching career as the Theatre Director at Kearney High School. Mr. Shoemaker retired in 2012

after 44 years of teaching. Mel was also a dedicated play production and speech judge for the NSAA, which he continued to do after his retirement from teaching. He has been passionate about theatre throughout his life and has been part of numerous theatre productions.

Mel was a member of First United Methodist Church where he was active in choir, as well as several committees. He was also a member of the Nebraska Association of Community Theatres, the NSEA, NEA and KEA. He also enjoyed traveling, playing the piano, singing and raising flowers. Mel always looked forward to spending time with his friends and family, and especially loved attending the various activities of his grandchildren.

He is survived by his loving wife of 48 years, Arlene of Kearney; two daughters, Toni L. Heimes and husband Matt of Lincoln and Jaci D. Pohl and husband David of Kearney; a son, Chad A. Shoemaker and wife Megan of Lincoln; five grandchildren, Kameron Heimes, Ella Hamilton, Brooklyn Shoemaker, Dylan Pohl and Sydney Pohl; and two sisters, Elaine Anderson and husband Norman of Broken Bow and Lois Jameson and husband Clifford of Kearney.

Mel was preceded in death by his parents; a grandson, Kaleb Matthew Heimes; two brothers, Eldon and Ralph Shoemaker; and two sister-in-laws, Eunice Shoemaker and Linda Shoemaker.

Cemetery Details

Kearney Cemetery

4400 Avenue I
Kearney, NE 68847
(308) 233-3244

Previous Events

Visitation

MAY 30. 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM (CT)

O'Brien Straatmann Redinger Funeral Homes and Cremations
4115 Ave N
Kearney, NE 68847
(308) 234-3500
info@osrfh.com
<https://www.osrfh.com>

Funeral Service

MAY 31. 10:30 AM (CT)

First United Methodist Church
4500 Linden Drive
Kearney, NE 68847

Tribute Wall



“ O'Brien Straatmann Redinger Funeral Home created a Tribute Video in memory of Mel K. Shoemaker



O'Brien Straatmann Redinger Funeral Homes and Cremations - June 02, 2016 at 02:42 PM



“ Mel K. Shoemaker

January 28, 2023 at 08:01 AM



“ Sasha E Conrad lit a candle in memory of Mel K. Shoemaker



Sasha E Conrad - July 23, 2016 at 03:58 PM

ZE

“ I wish I had been able to make the memorial service. But since I couldn't I will share what I would have said to his family here. Mel was a great teacher and mentor to many of us. Thank you for sharing him with us. Know that every late evening spent at play rehearsal was one treasured now by those who experienced it. The long trips for competitions golden cherished memories. Mel was one of the most selfless and caring men I have ever met and he will be sorely missed. I made a Facebook group called Mel Shoemaker Memories which I hope you have time to look at as there are a few great stories there. My thoughts and prayers are with you. Just remember he wouldn't have wanted us to cry too long. Life is meant to be lived and enjoyed. That's probably the greatest thing he taught any of us.

Zackery Einspahr - June 01, 2016 at 12:34 AM

DS

“ My sincere sympathy to the family. Mel was such an inspiration to so many students! He was so kind and gave everyone the same respect. He was an example of the person you want your child to be influenced by! I felt fortunate he was a huge part of my son's high school life! Thank you Mr. Shoemaker for giving so much...you truly made a difference!

Deb Stickney

Deb Stickney - May 31, 2016 at 07:16 PM

PJ

“ Our condolences to Mel & family. What a terrific loss. I met Mel through my brother-in-law, Richard Johnson, many years ago. A wonderful person & teacher. I know he touched many lives. Prayers to all!

Paula Johnson - May 31, 2016 at 04:24 PM



“ *Mel was kind and patient with his students. In the classroom he had a way to make you feel comfortable performing and his response was invaluable. I'll always remember his wonderful laugh from the auditorium. He had us all grinning from ear to ear with that laugh. I was fortunate to catch up with him after hearing him in the audience at performances over the last ten years which was a blessing.*

Patrick Marlatt - May 31, 2016 at 10:20 AM



“ *Full Of Love Bouquet was purchased for the family of Mel K. Shoemaker.*



May 30, 2016 at 11:45 PM



“ *Mr Shoemaker was by far the greatest influence on my life in his classroom and on the stage that he directed everyone was equal there was no favorites or one sided casts he always gave a person a shot. To the family you are in my thoughts and prayers.*
Bill Crosier
Class 2012
Act well thy part where thy honor lies

Bill Crosier - May 30, 2016 at 11:08 PM

CM

“Mel has been an inspiration to me for as long as I can remember. He was a fabulous play director, a good friend, and an incredible man. He will be greatly missed. You are all in my thoughts and prayers.

Carmen Meyer

Carmen Meyer - May 30, 2016 at 09:18 PM

DS

“For the last several days, I've been searching for the right words to share about this wonderful man. I realize now that if my classmates, teammates and I were to set down and write a tribute, It would be a manuscript, and we still wouldn't be able to say enough.

Mel demanded you know your lines, but also encouraged you to put something of yourself into the performance. He had a way of bringing out the best in everyone, be they the lead or the set builder. Without knowing it, we all demanded excellence in ourselves when working with him. Be it One Acts, speech contests, improvisation in the classroom, or the Class Play productions, I couldn't wait to get there. And I knew he approved of the performance, when I heard his unmistakable laugh.

It is the supreme ART of the TEACHER to awaken JOY in creative expression and knowledge. - Albert Einstein

Thank You and God Bless you MEL!

Dave Sims (Uncle Jed) NL-S Class of 77

David Sims - May 30, 2016 at 06:24 PM

CK

“ It is said that we are only allotted a certain amount of time in this world and we must do the best we can with the time we have, and at the end of the day the best we can hope for is for someone to say good job ... Good Job Mr Shoemaker, Good Job

Craig Knispel - May 30, 2016 at 02:26 PM

MB

“ My sincere condolences to all of you. Mel, as you all know, was a wonderful teacher, a great human being, and a terrific friend as well. May your memories of all you shared and the knowledge of how well-loved he was help you through these really tough days ahead. My thoughts and prayers are with you all.

Melissa L. Beall - May 29, 2016 at 11:47 PM



“ Florist Choice Bouquet was purchased for the family of Mel K. Shoemaker.



May 29, 2016 at 06:49 PM



“ Bountiful Rose Basket was purchased for the family of Mel K. Shoemaker.



May 29, 2016 at 06:02 PM



“ *Serene Retreat was purchased for the family of Mel K. Shoemaker.*



May 28, 2016 at 04:19 PM



“ *Basket of Joy was purchased for the family of Mel K. Shoemaker.*



May 28, 2016 at 11:21 AM



“ *Johnson-Plate Family purchased the Emerald Garden Basket for the family of Mel K. Shoemaker.*



Johnson-Plate Family - May 28, 2016 at 09:59 AM

KS

“ I was subbing for Mel in the Little Theater at KHS. I was showing a movie on his little TV set that was supposedly strapped to a tall cart. I decided to move the cart to a better angle for the class to see the movie while standing on the floor. The cart/TV was on the small stage. As I was moving the cart, it caught and jerked. The TV went flying over my head and crashed to the floor. I am sure the next day the class shared with Mel the story of how the TV went flying over my head. I felt awful about it! However, He DID let me sub for him again. If he was upset with me I never knew it because his comment was...."They gave me a bigger TV this time!" That was the kind of person Mel was!

I wanted to share this story with you and send my sympathy to your family! Mel touched so many lives in a positive way! He truly was a gift from Heaven!

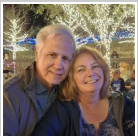
*Karen Smolik
Substitute teacher*

Karen Smolik - May 28, 2016 at 09:55 AM

WM

“ NLS-
Class of 1971 sends their condolences. Mr. Shoemaker was a wonderful speech and debate teacher.

Wendy Maser - May 28, 2016 at 08:37 AM



“ *Toni, Jaci and Chad: You shared your Dad with us. Thank you. He was an amazing educator. He touched more lives then could be measured. I'm so sorry for your loss. God bless.*

Karen Larsen - May 27, 2016 at 11:26 PM

CS

“ I've tried and tried to write something fitting for this man, but nothing seems good enough. English class, speech contests, One-Act plays, Community Theatre-and all those practices! Other than my family, this is the man who had the most influence on my life. I couldn't be a part of the sports teams or band and was struggling for direction in Junior High School, and then Mel made me a part of his team. I will never forget "The Actors Nightmare" and of course the Class of 77 Class Plays. He even took a whipped cream pie to the face with grace! My sincere sympathy to Arlene and family. We will miss him, but never forget him!! Carolyn (Meyer) Scarborough

Carolyn M. Scarborough - May 27, 2016 at 09:03 PM

LD

“ Mel was the ultimate professional at speech meets, was highly respected for his knowledge, and he was just a really nice person! Always took time to visit with familiar faces and we did so many times at competitions when he was judging. He will be truly missed and I extend my condolences to his family. Lanette Doane - Ansley

Lanette Doane - May 27, 2016 at 08:45 PM

DR

“ MEL and I were close friends at Homeward Trail Bible Camp. We graduated the same year, however we were rivals; I was from Mason and he was from Ansley. He will be missed, your family will be in my Prayers. Delson Runyan and family

Delson Runyan - May 27, 2016 at 06:55 PM

AB

“ Anne Bowman purchased the Medium Dish Garden for the family of Mel K. Shoemaker.



Anne Bowman - May 27, 2016 at 04:08 PM

CV

“ I was so fortunate to see Mel at the recent KHS retired teachers reunion. We laughed and shared stories about speech and theatre. He was such a passionate person who gave others the love of theatre he embodied. His legacy will be in part the many people he touched during the rehearsals to create a perfect play for the audience to enjoy. He will be missed at the annual state speech contest where his smile greeted everyone. I feel privileged to have known him. Connie Francis Vincentini

Connie Francis Vincentini - May 27, 2016 at 03:58 PM

AO

“ Mr. Shoemaker- was a huge influence on me. I thank him for being such a wonderful teacher. Heaven gained a new angel- He will be missed here on earth. God bless!
-Abigail (Sawyer) Oxley

Abigail Oxley - May 27, 2016 at 02:23 PM

TC

“ *The Faulkenberry's - Butch, Casey, and Cooper purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Mel K. Shoemaker.*




The Faulkenberry's - Butch, Casey, and Cooper - May 27, 2016 at 12:40 PM



“ *Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Mel K. Shoemaker.*



May 27, 2016 at 12:19 PM

 Kristi
Wiezorek

“ *I remember Mr. Shoemaker in theater class having us say our last names in a theatrical way..... the way he expressed his was very humerus I'll never forget that day!!!!*

Kristi wiezorek. Class of 2000

Kristi Wiezorek - May 27, 2016 at 12:19 PM

CS

“ I did not like to talk out loud
To move and gesture to the crowd.
To flail my wrist upwards toward the sky.
To memorize the lines and not ask WHY?
I did not like it when he would shout.
The word “PROJECT”! It made me pout.
Commands! Commands! Commands!
Keep your back towards the curtain!
Enunciate! Pause! Wait!
AND YET.....

There was the MAGIC, everyone worked, everyone showed up, and did their job. It did not matter if it was the class play, one act, the entry for the speech meet, or a presentation for English Literature, because it wasn't a job....it had become FUN. The ability to teach a student to tap into the magic within themselves.....find that which they did not know they had...and bring it to the forefront. That is the secret ingredient of Mel Shoemaker. He had the ability to show others how to find their strengths through creative expression. I not only had the opportunity to see this at school but also at the swimming pool working with Mel when he managed (or attempted to manage the yearly crop of teenage lifeguards) and taught swimming lessons. When teaching little children he would “Pretend” to be a carnival ride and tenderly dip small children up and down in the water as the ride (himself) would rotate in circles all the while talking in that high-pitched sing-song voice that we all know. Thank you Mel Shoemaker for being a great and fun teacher. You will be missed.

Arlene, Toni, Jaci, and Chad prayers and hugs to you all. Carrie Sheldon

Carrie Sheldon - May 27, 2016 at 10:06 AM

FF

“ Fred, Jennifer and Matt, Shanda, Arthur, & family purchased the Lovely One Spathiphyllum Plant for the family of Mel K. Shoemaker.



Fred, Jennifer and Matt, Shanda, Arthur, & family - May 27, 2016 at 09:08 AM



“ Divine Peace Bouquet was purchased for the family of Mel K. Shoemaker.



May 27, 2016 at 08:57 AM

AD

“ For Mel

Begin at the beginning when it's difficult to find a place to start.

Even though Mel and I grew up just a few miles from one another and share some ancestral DNA in our great-great Cherry grandparents (I think I have that right), I never knew Mel until I took a teaching position at North Loup Scotia Schools. At school, Mel was my unofficial mentor teacher. Mel was like that; he would not let a co-teacher flounder and struggle. He gave gentle suggestions and friendly support to his colleague in the high school English department (the two of us were the department).

Away from school, Mel and his wonderful wife Arlene became mentors to my husband and me. We were newlyweds the fall of my second year of teaching, and Mel and Arlene welcomed us in their home countless evenings during that year. Toni and Jaci were also a part of our evenings (Chad came along about the time Dennis and I took teaching positions several counties away from Scotia). During those short years, Mel was like a big brother to us. He even helped us move and wished us well.

Mel taught us how to be part of community. He pulled us into the sessions for writing skits for Scotia's Homecoming and North Loup's Popcorn Days. Then he drew us into performing in those skits! We organized the Bicentennial Singers and developed a repertoire of patriotic music to take on the road to nearby towns. We have never forgotten that community is a universal human need.

Mel was also a faith mentor to both Dennis and me. He made sure we were invited to sing in the choir at church. The example of Mel and Arlene was influential in both our choice of a church and in our attendance. Mel lived his faith in a life of trusting in the Lord, joy in all God provided him, and acceptance of all.

Though we kept in touch via Christmas cards, it was my returning to

full-time teaching and coaching speech that reconnected us. Seeing that friendly face, getting a “Mel” hug, and sharing interests felt like we had not missed out on about 20 years. When Mel got to judge my daughter in speech and give his positive and encouraging comments, I was happy to bask in his goodness. I learned so much from Mel about students—how to expect excellence and help them learn from mistakes. How to encourage each student, yet establish clear boundaries. A conversation with Mel was a seminar in the importance of speech and drama for students—a place for them to learn to communicate well and to let their talents shine.

Mel’s life and influence was far-reaching yet humble. He will be missed, and his memory will stand as an example of the best in education, the arts, the faith community, and in how to be a friend. The last time I got to spend some time with Mel was the the Great Plains Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church held at Wichita in June of 2015. We happened to be having breakfast at the same time and place four mornings in a row! I treasure those conversations and friendly visits. When I get to conference in the first few days of June this year, I intend to carry the memories of Mel with me. I can hear his signature chuckle at the joy he found and the joy he gave.

*Ardith Hird Davenport
Just one of the Mason City kids!*

Ardith Davenport - May 27, 2016 at 08:41 AM

 Nicole
Leigh

“ Nicole Leigh lit a candle in memory of Mel K.
Shoemaker



Nicole Leigh - May 26, 2016 at 11:25 PM

SB

“ I don't know if any of my 1975 classmates will remember our English class with Mel, but one day we got off the subject and got to talking about the soap opera "the Young and the Restless" that he watched. I did not watch it and could not understand his excitement as he talked about it.....so over Christmas break I decided to watch it...and low and behold I got into it AND to this day dvd it when Im not at home and also watch Days of our lives, thanks to his excitement and discussion of soap operas.(or not)..I saw Mel a year or so ago and we had quite the laugh that after all the crap I gave him about soaps and now I was hooked.....and all the years at the Scotia pool with Deb Cadek and Carol Holt....oh my the stories we shared....the state has definitely lost a great man of great magnitude...one last thing I could also tell in his FB post how PROUD he was just a month or so ago of his grandson doing such a fantastic job all through his speech season and making it to nationals and excelling there as well....he was proud of his kids and the rest of the grandkids as well...he always had excitement in his voice and laugh....RIP MEL I will miss you my friend.....SHELLMO

shellmo benben - May 26, 2016 at 11:24 PM

LB

“ Sending Sympathy to the family. You are all in my thoughts and prayers.

Memory ; Melvin was a childhood friend and neighbor. When I was a Freshman he would pick me up at the mail box and gave me a ride to Ansley where we went to High School. We lost touch as adults but he would come say "Hi" to me when he'd bring his classes to perform at the school where I was the school cook. He will be missed by many.:)

Luella L. Barger (Brandt) - May 26, 2016 at 10:58 PM

SR

“ *Mr. Shoemaker was a great instructor and led my class to many victories. He taught us to be confident when under pressure, which even though I taught speech at the college level, it is this skill that has helped me handle my life in the Emergency Room and working with Trauma showing I am calm and in control in the creates tragedy. Thank you Mr. Shoemaker, I wish I could be there to honor you and support your family but I will be working in ER the next four Nights 12 hour shifts. My thoughts are with all of you, just know he was a great inspiration, and made a difference in my life. Steven J. Roy RN, BSN, MSC, ER & Trauma Charge Nurse.*

Steven J. Roy - May 26, 2016 at 10:30 PM



“ *Full Of Love Bouquet was purchased for the family of Mel K. Shoemaker.*




May 26, 2016 at 09:44 PM

LD

“ *Wonderful man!*

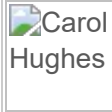
Lois Van Dusen - May 26, 2016 at 09:23 PM

 Janice
Harvey
Polk

“ *Arlene and family, Mel was one special man. Thank you for sharing him with us.*

Janice Harvey Polk

Janice Harvey Polk - May 26, 2016 at 09:01 PM



Thanks for the tribute, Doug and Janice. Hard to believe he is gone!

Carol Hughes - May 27, 2016 at 11:43 AM



“ *Blooming Garden Basket was purchased for the family of Mel K. Shoemaker.*



May 26, 2016 at 08:49 PM



“ *Mel had an amazing ability to make a young, inexperienced speech coach feel like a veteran, viable leader. The first time I met him was at North Loop/Scotia speech meet. Spread gingerly through 2 communities and using every nook & cranny for event sections. Thanks for the honor of knowing you, Mel.*

Marla Teegerstrom - May 26, 2016 at 07:48 PM



“ *What a wonderful man! Mel will be greatly missed by his family and many friends. Mel had a wonderful sense of humor and was always the life of the party. It was an honor to have been a colleague and friend. RIP Mel.*



Teresa Fullerton - May 26, 2016 at 06:56 PM

JG

“ Shoemaker family,
I'm praying for you all, that God may give you comfort at this time.. I have many memories of speech tournaments, one act plays and school musicals with Mr. Shoemaker teaching, coaching and directing. He was a talented, dedicated man who gave many hours to his students. May God comfort you all.

Janet (Knee) Gibbs - May 26, 2016 at 06:48 PM

SJ

“ Mel was my mentor from day one of entering the speech and drama world. He gave me advice and constantly inspired me. His laugh was contagious and his positive personality motivated students and adults alike. The first time Mel complimented me on my coaching I felt like I had won nationals; his opinion mattered that much to me. I have to say he was a better teacher and coach than a match maker; his goal of setting up a single speech coach with a local farmer never did work out. Although I could go on and on about the proud moments he had as a coach, none came close to the pride and love he had for his family. His face lit up when he told of his children and grand children's accomplishments. When missing him, just remember he always lives on in you. The speech and theater world will miss him dearly. His passing leaves me numb. My thoughts and prayers go out to his family.

Shari Johnson

shari johnson - May 26, 2016 at 05:59 PM



“ *Spring Has Sprung Mixed Basket was purchased for the family of Mel K. Shoemaker.*



May 26, 2016 at 04:50 PM



“ *My condolences to the Shoemaker family. Thank you for sharing Mr. Shoemaker with all of us. I know my life would be very different if he hadn't taught how and given me the courage to get up in front of a room full of people and speak. As you know he was truly an inspiration. Peggy (Johnson) Nabach*

Peggy Nabach - May 26, 2016 at 04:02 PM



“ *Mel was, in every sense, a gentleman: Kind, tender-hearted, thoughtful, and brimming with class. How I will miss our wonderful chats at convention, the Kearney or Gothenburg speech invites, or at State Speech, where he would share his signature wit and wisdom. The entire Nebraska speech and theater community, but in particular, the Gering speech family shares your loss, grieves with you and your whole family, and sends you its prayers for comfort, peace, and rest.*

Tyler Thompson - May 26, 2016 at 03:08 PM



We were so shocked to read of Mel's passing. He was a wonderful man. Our daughter (Minnie Benson) had the privilege of learning theater under Mel's direction. She always had good things to say about Mr. Shoemaker. Our thoughts & prayers are with your family. Greg & Marci Benson & Minnie

Marci Benson - May 31, 2016 at 03:11 PM