



Melvin D. Wattles

December 2, 1931 - November 11, 2020

Melvin D. (George) Wattles, 88, of Fountain Hills, Arizona, died Wednesday, Nov. 11, 2020, at Fountain Hills. Family meant everything to him and they were there when he passed on.

Memorial services will be held 10:30 a.m. Monday, August 23, 2021 at O'Brien Straatmann Redinger Funeral Home in Kearney. Inurnment will follow at Kearney Cemetery.

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Melvin D. (George) Wattles was born in Kearney on Dec. 2, 1931, to Melvin A. and Vera (Rowe) Wattles.

His strong work ethic began as a 12-year-old working at the shoe shine parlor on Central Avenue, and in his high school years at The World Theatre and the Fort Kearney Hotel where celebrities often came through. As a little boy, he was excited to see the great airplanes headed to war from the Kearney Air Force Base. He developed his lifelong love of cars working at a gas station and a used car lot in high school.

He began military training for the Air Force at Lackland Air Force Base in Texas during the Korean War and later was stationed at the Denver Air Force Base as an instructor of card punch IBM machines.

In 1956, he graduated from UNK where he earned his bachelor's degree in education, later to achieve his master's in education. His 36-year high school teaching career included Gibbon, Amherst and KHS. He was honored with the Nebraska Industrial Arts Teacher of the Year Award. His greatest teaching achievement was the Construction Tech class he developed at KHS where he designed and built 17 houses with students. He taught young men the skills of house building, pride in craftsmanship and responsibility.

He presented himself with a challenge by designing and building his own nine homes, including the A-Frame, one of the few in Nebraska. Many other homes in Kearney were designed by him.

In his retirement, he started an online business, RadioAge.com restoring antique radios that were sold all over the world.

He supported Virginia's desire to be a full-time artist often building her frames and doing everything he could to support her art. His good times with pals at McDonald's kept him laughing every morning. Mel and Virginia moved to Arizona to be near their daughter and grandsons.

Survivors include his wife, Virginia Wattles of Fountain Hills, Arizona; daughter, Kelli Lawhead of Fountain Hills, Arizona; son, Todd M. Johnson of Washington, D.C.; grandsons, Grant Urbom of Fountain Hills, Arizona, Alex Urbom, of Los Angeles; and granddaughter, Kate (Johnson) Salokorpi of Santa Barbara, California.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Melvin A. and Vera Wattles. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made in his name to the Kearney Area Animal Shelter. Mel always had a dog or two in his home.

Cemetery Details

Kearney Cemetery

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

Previous Events

Funeral Service

AUG 23. 10:30 AM (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>

Tribute Wall



“ *Melvin D. Wattles*

January 28, 2023 at 08:01 AM