



Lionel Burkes

March 25, 1933 - October 7, 2021

Lionel Seaton Burkes, 88, of Lowell, took his last earthly breath in the early afternoon; of October 7, 2021. His loving wife, Pansy (Hobbs) Burkes, was by his side and his four children nearby. Lionel passed as a dearly loved and proud man who possessed unshakable conviction, integrity, and honor.

He was a US Army veteran, a biologist, a research scientist, a college professor, a college administrator, a high school science teacher, a writer, a farmer/rancher, and a skilled carpenter who learned to literally build anything out of nothing in the wake of the Great Depression.

Lionel and Pansy were married on December 24, 1961. His passing is just two months shy of their 60th Wedding Anniversary. Aside from his devotion to Pansy, Lionel considered his children to be his greatest accomplishments. Their firstborn son, Geoffrey Dion, sadly passed just hours after being born in 1962. Their other children include a son Eric and wife Melissa, a daughter Cindy Piersol and husband John, a son Aaron and wife Rebecca, and a son Mark and wife Sherri. Their nine adoring grandchildren are Marcus and Mason Brownlow, Briley Piersol, and Nathan, Nicholas, Ainsley, Geoffrey, Easton, and Beckett Burkes. Their two great grands are Makynlee and Hunter Brownlow.

Lionel entered this world on March 25, 1933, as the seventh of ten children born to Elmo Cleopolis and Burna Ethal Cook Burkes in Madison County, Arkansas. As a teenager, Lionel became seriously ill with Polio - an illness that left him bedridden for months but that greatly strengthened his resolve to overcome life's hardships. He and his siblings, Keith, Tilley, Ardith "Shorty", Bea, Wanda, Goddard, Earl, Glen and Loy attended the Lone Star School in Clifty, AR, where the extended Burkes family hosts an annual reunion. His siblings, Earl, Glen and Loy are still living.

Lionel and his six brothers proudly served in various branches of the US armed forces. Lionel was in the Army from 1953-1955 and trained dogs during the Korean War. His time in service bears witness to his love of country. He often shared the story of a war dog named Archer that was so loyal to him that he gave his life after Lionel returned home. Lionel loved animals of all kinds but chose to honor Archer by never personally owning another dog. He also advocated for patriotism and service of veterans by actively volunteering with the American Legion for many years.

After the war, Lionel attended the University of Arkansas and earned his bachelor's degree in Education in 1960. He soon found himself teaching in the small village of Corona, New Mexico, where he was impressed by a local rancher's daughter. True to his honest and diplomatic nature, Lionel approached the school board seeking permission to date her upon her graduation. With blessings from both the school and her father, Lionel and Pansy courted and soon started their life together as a married couple.

In the years that followed, jobs paved the way for Lionel to seek career opportunities in states other than New Mexico, including Wyoming, Texas, Louisiana, Missouri, Iowa, Wisconsin, West Virginia, and his home state, Arkansas. Lionel's highest priorities were education and learning, which he proved by achieving a master's degree in Biology Science from the University of Montana in 1964. In addition to teaching, Lionel applied his love and knowledge of genetics as a researcher with top security clearance at Sandia National Labs in Albuquerque. While teaching, Lionel fed his passion for reading by joining many book clubs. He pursued his love for travel by volunteering for People to People International, a student travel organization, where he chaperoned several trips to foreign countries. Lionel retired from Ft. Smith Public Schools in 1995.

In retirement, Lionel never ceased his pursuit of learning as he explored during his extensive travels with Pansy to Europe, Asia, and all over the United States. He read and researched countless books and magazines, which he meticulously catalogued and filed in his personal library. He cherished the quiet stillness of time on the family's ranch in New Mexico, tinkering and fixing things around the house, and flexing his green thumb to plant gardens that yielded delicious fruits and vegetables. But most of all, he treasured time spent with Pansy and his family.

You'll never know a more unique, kind, and gentle soul than Lionel Burkes. We are thankful for the time we had with him and honor the legacy he leaves on this earth. He is the epitome of a life well lived.

A celebration of Lionel's life will be held at 10:00 AM, Saturday, October 9, 2021; in the chapel of Brashears Funeral Home and Crematory in Huntsville, AR, with Reverend Max Bowlin officiating. He will be laid to rest privately with family in New Mexico. Pallbearers will be his grandchildren: Marcus and Mason Brownlow and Nathan, Nicholas, Geoffrey, and Easton Burkes. Honorary pallbearers will be Ainsley and Beckett Burkes and his brothers, Loy and Earl Burkes. In lieu of flowers, the family wishes memorial contributions in Lionel's honor be made to the Lone Star School Heritage, 1074 Madison 8340, Hindsville, AR 72738, Attn: Max Bowlin. Services are entrusted to Brashears Funeral Home and Crematory.

Tribute Wall

LW

“ My love and prayers to you, Pansy, and all the family as you celebrate your remarkable husband and father. May the Lord's peace and protection cover you as you travel to NM. Blessings!!

Linda Wilkins - October 08, 2021 at 12:00 AM

DH

“ My deepest condolences Mrs.Pansy Burkes and your family. I was fortunate to meet Mr. Lionel Burkes this past summer enjoyed our conversation with him. Our prayers are with your family. May he rest in peace.

Dorothy Howland - October 08, 2021 at 12:00 AM

LW

“ Pansy, I am so sorry over Lionel's passing. He was a remarkable husband, father, and friend. I considered him family. May the Lord give you peace and you celebrate his life and then take him to NM. Blessings!

Linda Wilkins - October 08, 2021 at 12:00 AM

TB

“ Pansy, I am so sorry for your loss. Reading his obituary, I am sorry I never got to know this brilliant man. Lord Jesus, keep your hand of protection of Pansy and family as they travel through these next days and weeks. I love you Pansy.

Thelma J Bromley - October 08, 2021 at 12:00 AM

BW

“ We are thinking and praying for your family as you celebrate Lionel's life.

Brent & Julie Wilkins - October 07, 2021 at 12:00 AM