

Robert Forbes “Bob” White 1938 - 2019



Robert Forbes “Bob” White went peacefully to be with the Lord on Sunday, July 28, 2019 surrounded by loving family and friends. A visitation with family greeting friends will be held from 6:00-8:00pm on Thursday, August 1, 2019 at Strode Funeral Home in Stillwater, OK. Memorial service will follow at 11:00am on Friday, August 2, 2019 at the First United Methodist Church in Stillwater.

Robert Forbes White was born to Alex E White and Dorothy Forbes White on February 15th, 1938. He was the grandson of Will P. Forbes, owner of the Hotel Forbes in Poteau, Oklahoma. He graduated from Poteau High School in 1956 after 12 years of wonderful schooling and the best teachers one could have. While in school, the Company 180th Cavalry of the National Guard returned from the Korean War. Everyone was getting out of the Guard, so he joined the 45th Division of the National Guard when he was 15 years old with several other school friends. He obtained the rank of Sergeant 1st Class before he received his discharge after 8 years of Army service.

After lettering 4 years in football in Poteau High School, he played in the All State game in Oklahoma City and the Oil Bowl game in Texas. He always credited his success on the field and in life to Coach Sherman Floyd for teaching him to accept the hard times as well as the good times. He attended Oklahoma A&M, now Oklahoma State University on a football scholarship, and transferred to Northeastern University in Tahlequah in 1957.

He moved back to Poteau where he enrolled in Poteau Junior College, now Carl Albert, in order to help his mother settle his grandfather’s estate. While there he attended school, drove a school bus, helped a local plumber, and coached junior high football before returning to OSU in 1958 to major in Trade and Industrial Education. While working on his degree, he ran the bar at the Elks Club and ran the desk at the Ralph Milan Hotel for a free room. During the summers, he moved to Oklahoma City and worked as a bartender in the Tower Club of the Skirvin Hotel.

In 1960, he fell in love with and married Mary LeBaron, who had two children, David and Suzanne. Mary was a hairdresser, salon owner, and member of the Thunder Bird Hair Fashion Committee of Oklahoma. After getting married, he became an agent for Oklahoma Farm Bureau Insurance, but soon decided he didn’t like selling insurance, so he started beauty school in 1961 and received his basic and advanced licenses, as well as an instructor’s license with plans to open a beauty school. In 1962, he purchased the Union Beauty Salon in the Student Union of Oklahoma State University where he supervised 11 hairdressers and styled hair himself. During the next couple of years, he bought four more beauty salons and supervised 28 hairdressers. Bob continued going to college to earn his bachelor’s and master’s degrees in Trade

and Industrial Education as well as teacher's certificate and administrator's licenses before being accepted into the Doctoral Program of Occupational and Industrial Education at Oklahoma State University. Additionally, he was the Payne County Republican Chairman, helping Dewey Bartlett win the Governorship of the State of Oklahoma. He then filed and ran for Payne County Commissioner and won the election. After 6 years as a County Commissioner, he started building the first of 4 Orange Pride Carwashes in Stillwater. Over the course of his career, he ran a small car wash supply company, continued running Orange Pride Carwashes, started White Real Estate and Rental Company and acquired 40 rental units around Stillwater. He spent time as the president of Stillwater Boat Club and Stillwater Apartment Association, remained a member of the Infrastructure Committee of the Stillwater Chamber of Commerce, received the honor of 32nd degree Freemason, remained a member of the Masonic Lodge for 50 years, and remained a member of the American Legion for 60 years. Additionally, he was a lifetime member of the Alumni Association, O Club, and Posse Clubs of Oklahoma State University, a member of the Stillwater Elks Lodge, Moose Lodge, and remained a proud member of the First United Methodist Church, where he regularly attended Friday Morning Men's Prayer Breakfast.

Over the course of his lifetime, his family grew and he and his wife, children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren enjoyed many happy memories. In 2011, his wife developed acute myeloid leukemia. After a hard fight, Mary passed away in her home, with Bob by her side, in January of 2013. In the following years, Bob semi-retired, selling all but one carwash and running 15 rental units. In 2016, Bob started dating Dr. Fern Bowling, who he had known from working on their Doctoral degrees at Oklahoma State University and had consistently run into at meetings, galas, and community events. Bob and Fern were engaged with plans to marry in the future.

He is preceded in death by his wife, Mary Bookout White of 53 years, his mother and father, two sisters, Nancy Emmaline and Dorothy Marion White.

He is survived by his son, David LeBaron and his wife Carol of Stillwater, daughter, Suzanne LeBaron Golay of Branson, Missouri; grandchildren, Emily Beers and husband David, Ashley Harman, and David Williams; seven great grandchildren, Nicole, Zen, Zella, Maddox, Ava, Daxton and Gracie.

Bob was a member of Hanner-Sharp American Legion Post 129 for 62 years.