



Valton Watkins

August 5, 1922 - April 22, 2011

Valton Derwin Watkins passed away peacefully in his sleep on April 22, 2011. He has gone home to be with Jesus and the Angels. Val was born on August 5, 1922 in Winnsboro, TX to Lee and Lucille Waters Watkins.

Surviving are his wife Jean Watkins of Evensville, son Vernon Watkins of Amarillo, TX, sister Nita Jean Thornton of Vancouver, WA and niece Janice (Bart) Block of Wenatchee, WA.

Val graduated from high school when he was 16. His adventurous spirit compelled him to travel around the country before obtaining his Bachelor's Degree from Texas Tech. He served in the Navy during World War II.

Returning to civilian life in 1947, Val earned his Master's Degree in electrical engineering from Southern Methodist University.

At Cape Canaveral, Val wrote test programs in the early days of the space program. Val retired from TVA after working at Sequoia and Watts Bar.

Val enjoyed square dancing, collecting mementos as he visited square dance clubs in all 50 states. Val had many plaques and other prizes from his participation in 26K races and marathons. Val loved working on his little farm in Evensville. He was just as adept at working the land as he was at complicated mathematical calculations.

Val epitomized "The Greatest Generation" for he possessed all the qualities that made his generation great. In addition to his wonderful sense of humor, Val was courageous, kind, supremely honest and decent in every way and he will be sadly missed, although we know he is in a better place now.

Graveside services for Val will be held Tuesday morning at 11:30 am at Chattanooga National Cemetery, followed by military honors.

Please share your memories of Mr. Watkins on his on-line guest register at www.vanderwallfh.com.

Arrangements by Vanderwall Funeral Home.

Previous Events

Service
APR 26 . 11:30 AM.
Graveside

Tribute Wall



“ My cousin, Valton Watkins, was a hero to me during my boyhood years and I have enjoyed talking about it ever since. Val worked for us during the summers while he was at Texas Tech and the macho things he did thrilled me as a 10 year old boy. He would carry his homemade slingshot and some selected rocks and pebbles on the tractor while he plowed and planted sudan grass seeds to clear the sandhills in our pasture. When he would see a gopher rat or rabbits, he would stop the tractor and kill the rats and rabbits that were eating our crops. When the field work was done Val would practice the shot put for the team at Texas Tech. Val was my unforgettable hero and I still remember those days like they were yesterday.##imported-begin##Darwin Watkins##imported-end##

May 01, 2011 at 03:28 PM



“ I was keeping in touch with Jean these last months about my father's recently doing poorly from having to take some strong antibiotics, then I heard that the infection was cleared up, and I was looking forward to visiting with him, and Jean, again this October. So when Jean recently called me to say that Val had passed away I was shocked. Am handling it better lately, but what a loss and disappointment. Thank you all for sharing your wonderful insights into his life, and of his accomplishments. I will surely miss him. Last October, for my first time seeing how he was after his stroke, I was saddened by his memory loss. I'm glad that Nita got to see him a couple of months earlier. During my visit I kidded with him saying on occasion: Tell me about your son! He usually responded: I don't know, or Well.. But Jean told me later that he was pretty much aware of who I was and was glad that I came to see him, even remembering me throughout the months after.

I met Jean for the first time then, and Loved her right away. Speaking of, during my visit, I was glad to feel a renewed compassion for Val with his having such a severe disability, and at least I got to tell him before he left us, that I loved him, one evening after we returned from going out to eat and he had started to lay down to rest. He looked at me and replied: Yeah!, and a second later said: Thanks! and gave me a smile. That was a good moment, I'll never forget it. Jean is absolutely wonderful, and I feel deeply for her over her loss.

When Val, my mother Nea, and I were in San Diego when I a young teenager, we made several summer trips to see Val's father Henry Lee Watkins and his second wife Ella. Long ago! I enjoyed each time and remember we all did some fishing on his ponds and also went into town a few times to get walnut ice cream, delicious. I rode my first horse there, I think Val was amused at that.

Yes I remember his rock collecting too, agates and geodes and fire opals were interesting to my young curiosity, and how he cut and shaped the pieces to make them into nice jewelry at the lapidary shop of General Dynamics in San Diego, where he worked at the time designing test systems for aircraft, probably missiles as well, during several years there before he later started his square

dancing (I saw him square dance once or twice!) and working for TVA.

I know indeed, due to first hand observation, that he could fix most anything -as was practical, and he definitely valued integrity and honesty in his life, which was a fortunate influence on me.

For more information on my early life and later life with Val, I think I'll start writing my memoirs about him on a section of one of my websites, it will be: 123pcpc.com/val.htm

So, please keep checking it in the weeks ahead, and I would value your comments, improvements, and suggestions. Sincerely, Vern Watkins.##imported-begin##Vern Watkins##imported-end##

May 01, 2011 at 02:16 PM



“ Val was a friend of mine, we worked together at TVA before he retired. We often played bridge at lunchtime. He was a fine man and had a lot of interesting stories to tell.##imported-begin##Ernest Farwell##imported-end##

May 01, 2011 at 10:07 AM



“ It was a real honor to know my stepfather, Valton Watkins. He was the most interesting person I have ever met He was very knowledgeable on a wide variety of topics, unpretentious, you had to draw him out, he was very modest! He was an inspiration to me and I have immense respect for him.##imported-begin##Scott Bowen##imported-end##

May 01, 2011 at 07:25 AM



“ I will truly miss spending time with Val. He was a great man and I loved his sense of humor. I enjoyed walking his farm as he showed me his grape vines, old-timey syrup mill that belonged to his dad, and his homemade wine collection, including jalapeno wine. My little daughter Katie, my husband Kelly, and our dog Cricket were always so happy to see Val and spend time with him. Val was one in a million and I am so lucky to have known him.##imported-begin##Lorraine Higginbotham##imported-end##

April 29, 2011 at 11:01 AM



“ Our heartfelt condolences to his wife and Family. Val was a very good friend to us. He had a wonderful sense of humor! He was a very,very good bridge player and we have wonderful memories of the many games we played with him and Jean. We are going to miss him terribly but the memoreis will linger on forever. Thanks Val for being our friend! Travis and Martha##imported-begin##Martha and Travis Westbrook##imported-end##

April 26, 2011 at 12:41 PM



“ I will miss my only brother, Val. Thankfully, I visited last August and was there for his 88th birthday. When Val and I were growing up in Winnsboro, Texas, we had many squabbles, mainly because I was 6 years younger and he didn't always want "little sister" with him and his pals. But let somebody try to do something to me, and Val was right there as my protector. When he graduated from high school and left home, I was 10 years old.

Times I cherish are visits as adults.

Val liked to fix up old things, such as that old tractor or my dad's 1964 pickup that he inherited. He could have bought new parts, but it was more fun for him to tinker around and make it work. He had so many skills and could figure out what made something tick. He appreciated good food, growing vegetables (a few years ago), square dancing, classical music, flea markets, AND JEAN. She was a super care giver for his last years.

Nita Thornton, Val's sister

Vancouver, Washington##imported-begin##Nita Thornton##imported-end##

April 26, 2011 at 12:33 PM



“ Our love and prayers go out to Jean and the rest of the family. Take comfort in the fact that, though all may change around us, God is never-changing. His love endures forever and through all situations and circumstances. We're praying his loving arms encompass especially Jean right now. Grace & Peace - Andrew + Angela Block.##imported-begin##Andrew & Angela Block##imported-end##

April 25, 2011 at 06:35 PM



“ We send our sympathy to Jean. Uncle Val was always kind and good to us, and we are thankful for his long and healthy life. We really enjoyed when he came to see us in Washington in the mid-80's and spent a few days in our home. Bart took him to a Sonics basketball game and Uncle Val worked some on Bart's 1938 Plymouth hotrod pickup truck, which was very helpful and fun for all of us. I remember childhood memories of our family meeting Uncle Val in Kingman, Arizona, for vacation. He took us on hikes and I always appreciated his love of the outdoors. He started me off on a hobby of rock collecting! Uncle Val loved to play dominoes and 42, so that was always a rousing good time with him at the kitchen table--good fun. We went to see Uncle Val in 1974 in Langdon, NorthDakota. He lived in several places around the country over the years, and probably knew more about America than most people. He was vey patriotic and fought for our country's FREEDOM in World War II while serving in the Navy. Several times we met Uncle Val at the Seattle Airport when he was flying to and fro to Square Dance conventions! I liked those photos in his square dance attire! We are thankful that JEAN was in his life these past few years--his life was blessed by her lovingkindness and good care. God bless you, Jean. We wish we were with you especially this week. Love, Janice & Bart Block, Wenatchee, Washington###imported-begin##Janice & Bart Block##imported-end##

April 25, 2011 at 01:24 PM