



George Nelson Stenehjem

December 25, 1929 - September 24, 2024

Colonel George N. Stenehjem (retired, Army) of Edina, MN passed away September 24, 2024, in Bloomington, MN at the age of 94. He is survived by his wife Jean, nieces, nephews, grandnieces and nephews and great-grandnieces and nephews, and friends all around the world. Preceded in death by his son John, and siblings, Julian and Leslie Stenehjem, Ethel Ofstehage, and Lois Lokensgard, and bonus Drovdal siblings Inez, Ruth, Bud, Helen, and Dorothy Anne.

George was born on December 25, 1929, in a Hatton, North Dakota farmhouse to John Selmer and Georgiana Nelson Stenehjem. His mother passed away shortly after he was born. As an infant, George was cared for by his aunt and uncle Inga and Adolf Solum in Spring Grove, MN for his first few months and later raised by aunt and uncle Anna and Olaf Drovdal in Western North Dakota. George considered the Drovdals a second family and remained close to them.

George attended North Dakota State University for one year prior to his appointment to the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York. George graduated from West Point in 1954 and was commissioned as a 2nd lieutenant. In 1966 George earned a Master's Degree in Business from the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. George married Jean Sylvester in 1954. He first met her when he was six. George and Jean's first military assignment

was to Ft. Benning, Georgia. It was the first of many such assignments together. George's career sent them to Germany, Tennessee, Texas, and Ft. Rucker, Alabama, where son John was born.

The majority of George's career was spent in command, staff and education positions. His command experience was in Infantry, Armor and Aviation through battalion levels. He served as a Company Commander in Germany as a junior lieutenant. He was the aide to the Corp. Commander in Korea in 1963, a squadron commander of an armored cavalry squadron (25th division) in Vietnam in 1967 and a Battalion Commanding Officer of an aviation assault helicopter battalion (101st division) in Vietnam in 1970. He gained staff experience at both the Department of the Army and the Joint Chief of Staff level. He was a Professor of Military Science and Commander of Army ROTC at the University of Minnesota from 1975 to 1980. His service was recognized with numerous awards including the Legion of Merit with oak leaf cluster, Distinguished Flying Cross with oak leaf cluster, Soldier's Medal, Meritorious Service Medal with oak leaf cluster, Joint Service Foundation Medal, the Air Medal with 27 oak leaf clusters, as well as numerous Vietnamese Foreign Service and battle campaign awards.

George joked that the action in Vietnam was so intense that he would earn another medal every time he landed at the command post.

George retired in 1980 and became a professional snowbird, spending his winters in St. Petersburg, Florida and summers in Edina Minnesota. He traveled, taught at the U of M, played tennis and golf, rode his Honda Goldwing motorcycle on beautiful country roads and sailed his dinghy in Tampa Bay. He also spent time with family and friends. He made friends everywhere he went, and traveled with Jean through the United States, Asia and Europe and beautiful Norway. He was especially proud to be descended from hearty Norwegian immigrant farmers. George was a lifetime member of

veteran organizations, including the VFW, American Legion, the 101st Airborne Association and Retired Officers' Association.

In the Army, it was often said that George was a guy who made things happen and got even the toughest jobs done. He tried to improve in all situations and always maintained a positive attitude. One of his favorite sayings was, "Don't take life too seriously. None of us are going to leave here alive." George will be remembered as a man who achieved many great things but never forgot the importance of friendship and the feeling of the wind in your hair.

Funeral to be held at Ft. Snelling Chapel, 1 Tower Ave, Minneapolis, MN 55450 on Friday, October 11. 9 am visitation, 10 am memorial service with lunch to follow at Lost Spur Country Club and Event Center, 2750 Sibley Memorial Hwy, Eagan, MN 55121. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to www.woundedwarriorproject.org.

Previous Events

Visitation

OCT 11. 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM (CT)

Fort Snelling Memorial Chapel
1 Tower Avenue
Minneapolis, MN 55417

Memorial Service

OCT 11. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (CT)

Fort Snelling Memorial Chapel
1 Tower Avenue
Minneapolis, MN 55417

Graveside Service

NOV 13. 1:30 PM - 1:45 PM (CT)

Fort Snelling National Cemetery
7601 34th Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55450

Tribute Wall

HW

“ *Hilde Nora Wang lit a candle in memory of George Nelson Stenehjelm*



Hilde Nora Wang - November 26, 2024 at 05:17 AM

BE

“ *I used to race little speedboats in Tampa Bay and after he would bring his boat in he'd always ask me "Who's winning the race Champ?" and we would small talk about boating, military, gardening and he was fascinated with my love of thrill-seeking. He was a solid guy. He commanded respect and he deserved it. I hope to still see him in his boat in the bay when I go next summer.*

Benjamin - October 12, 2024 at 06:01 PM