



## Leonard William Fernelius

July 1, 1932 - March 11, 2026

St. Louis Park, MN - Len Fernelius passed away on March 11, 2026, at age 93. He was born on July 1, 1932, in Minneapolis, Minn. to Herb and Esther Fernelius. He was the youngest of three children and in 1939 his parents divorced. After several moves and attending different schools, his mother and siblings (sister Louise and brother Bob) eventually found a home in St. Louis Park. It wasn't much as Dad told the story - no indoor plumbing and only a handpump in the basement - but it was home. He was so proud of his SLP roots and returned to the community toward the end of his life.

Len graduated from St. Louis Park High School in 1950 and enrolled at the University of Minnesota. A year later he took a job as a mail clerk with the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis and was drafted into the U.S. Army and served in Korea as part of the Eighth Army. In a strange twist of fate, he arrived in Korea in August 1953 a few weeks after the armistice was signed. After an 18-month tour of duty, he returned to the Twin Cities and his full-time job at the Federal Reserve. It was the start of a 40-year career with the bank.

He met his wife Elaine after being set up on a blind date and in September 1957 they were married in Selby, S.D., where Elaine grew up on the family farm. Elaine's family welcomed him as one of their own and Dad considered himself an adopted Flemmer, staying connected with many relatives until the end. The couple lived in Minneapolis for a few years, sharing a duplex with

Elaine's sister Ruby and husband Bill Cole. In 1969, they moved to Edina and raised two children, becoming part of the tight-knit Morningside neighborhood. Many long-lasting friendships were formed during that time.

Len retired from the Fed in 1993 as a senior vice president, but he couldn't sit idle and within a year began working as a consultant for the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, specializing in bank-to-bank payment systems. Most of his travels took him to underdeveloped, war-torn places. He helped rebuild broken financial infrastructure and made many new friends. He went on more than 100 mission trips to 40 different countries, making several complete circumnavigations around the globe. Elaine passed away in April 2000, after a brief illness. Len sold the family home and moved to Minneapolis where he lived in a townhome until 2021. He moved to the Parkwood/Parkshore senior living community in St. Louis Park that same year and remained there until his death.

Len was a quiet man with many passions. He loved his family, travel, reading, classical music, opera, art collected from around the world, long walks along the Mississippi River, swimming at the club, an occasional scotch, dog sitting his kid's labs and golden retrievers (Kelsey, Hunter, Caesar and Gussy), dining with family and friends, a frothy latte, and the Sunday edition of the New York Times. He always asked about family and especially his granddaughter Ellie and her interests. Not many knew that he also loved to write and inspired others to take up pen and paper. He took classes in his seventies at The Loft Literary Center in Minneapolis. Len was an avid Gopher fan, holding season tickets to Gopher Hockey for many years. He was independent, curious, quirky, and sometimes stubborn, but extremely generous. He grew up during the Great Depression with extraordinarily little - experiences that shaped his life and the giving of time, talents, and resources to help others.

Len was diagnosed with cancer in 2020 and put up a quiet fight against the disease for 6 years, living well beyond what the health care experts predicted. He is survived by his son Grant (wife Nancy and granddaughter Ellie), daughter Gretchen, and many nieces, nephews, and friends. A private burial will be held in the spring with plans for a celebration of life to be announced later. We want to thank all those who cared for Dad and especially those who visited or sent cards in the last few months of his life. Those acts of kindness were greatly appreciated.

In Len's memory, the family suggests donating money or time to a charity of your choice. Our dad (and late mother Elaine) supported so many causes and felt that giving in whatever way you can was an essential part of living a full and complete life.

We miss and love you.

Grant and Gretchen