



DeVern Hunter Phillips

April 6, 1946 - February 17, 2021

Wildlife and Parks announced they are withdrawing Mr. Phillips lifetime hunting and fishing permit. Mr. Phillips will be unable to use that permit in his current residence. In addition, Wildlife and Parks stated that Mr. Phillips had harvested far too many pheasants and quail and too few clay pigeons.

Mr. Phillips' parents, D.H. and Ruth Phillips, siblings, Judy McDowell, and Gerald Phillips preceded him in death. Rebecca Phillips, the love of his life, survives. They shared fifty-one years of fun, pain, laughs and tears. She was more than any man could wish for as a wife, lover, friend, and companion. DeVern and Rebecca's daughter and son-in-law, Crystal and Stephen Shanks, and their four children Stephen, Aspen, Devi, and Reili also survive. Crystal's position as a travel nurse, permitted them to move abroad beautiful places such as Florida, Idaho, and Arizona, and to return to her hometown when needed. DeVern was eternally grateful for their help and sacrifice.

DeVern was one of the Fearsome Foursome, a group representing "more than forty years" of friendship and brotherhood. His brothers Donald "Two Star" Jacka, Larry "Fetch" Karns, and Terry "The Norwegian" Nygaard carry on the legacy. Mr. Phillips' instructions to his family, "Tell the guys I'm going up ahead to scout out this place." Mr. Phillips leaves behind a multitude of former students as well as family and friends.

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13)

Mr. Phillips always enjoyed joking and storytelling. He had one final laugh to share with those he loved,

"An old man lay dying on his bed surrounded by his family and friends. As he lay dying, he raised himself up on an elbow and said, "I've not been a good husband nor a good father. I've spent too much money on guns, fishing, whiskey and dogs. I've not been around when I should have been for my family with my hunting and fishing trips. I have missed too many special occasions in my family's lives such as birthdays, graduations, marriages,

and births of my grandchildren. And for that, I'm terribly sorry. He gasped and laid back in bed and everyone thought he'd spoken his last. Shortly thereafter, he rallied himself up and spoke once more,

'On the other hand, I've had a hell of a good time.' "

If we all can say at the end of our lives on earth, "I've had a hell of a good time, we have had a life well lived." Composed by DeVern Hunter Phillips, "Grizz", "Mr. P"

Friday, November 5, 2020

+++++

DeVern's family and friends are familiar with his heart of generosity, compassion, and humility. He requested to forego a traditional memorial service, but as he loved storytelling the family wishes to honor him in a manner congruent to his example. Please share your thoughts or other stories of joy with DeVern at: www.kevinbrennanfamily.com.

Due to a plethora of allergies the family requests no food or flowers without first clearing it with the 'boss', Rebecca. Cards and 'stories' are always welcomed.

MEMORIAL FUND FOR DEVERN HUNTER PHILLIPS

DeVern's drive for knowledge was influence by his maternal grandmother who was a teacher. He created the Elsie Banks Educational Scholarship Fund to assist students paying for higher education. Please send memorial contributions to the fund, payable to:

Western Hills Church

MEMO: DeVern Phillips

2900 SW Auburn Road

Topeka, KS. 66614

Tribute Wall



“ Kevin Brennan Family Funeral Home created a Tribute Video in memory of DeVern Hunter Phillips



Kevin Brennan Family Funeral Home - March 02, 2021 at 10:15 AM

BW

“ Mr. Phillips was not my teacher, but he had an amazing sense of humor for the one next door. I recall Mrs. Dixon sending me to Mr. Phillips with \$4 and some change, for a \$5 bill. Keep in mind the change was not exact, it was less than a dollar. I knocked on his classroom door, and entered with the money in hand. I handed him the money and told him that Mrs. Dixon was looking for \$5. He promptly opened his desk drawer. Pulled out a \$5 bill, then proceeded to take scissors out from the same drawer and cut 1/8th of the bill and hand it to me. Without a word, I went back to Mrs. Dixon and handed her the damaged note and she just smiled and laugh. I'll never forget that moment.

Rest in peace sir. I didn't know you had passed.

Benjamin Wong - September 14, 2025 at 10:50 AM



“ DeVern Hunter Phillips

January 28, 2023 at 12:08 PM

DB

“ *Mr. Phillips will always be known to me as the man that taught me that it was okay not to be okay. In the 6th grade I went through a lot. I learned I was moving from Topeka to New Hampshire. I was going through some middle child syndrome. I was going through becoming a preteen who thought her world was falling apart. I remember writing our journals and him always writing back in them. I remember the day I wrote about moving away and how I was convinced my life was over. He helped me navigate my feelings and be okay with being sad about leaving but also to be excited for the new adventure. To this day I attribute him for my love of adventure and exploring because otherwise I would have always been too scared to leave my safe bubble. Rest easy Mr. Phillips and enjoy your adventure up there until you can teach us all about it when we join.*

DeLeah Barker - February 28, 2021 at 11:12 AM



DeLeah, thank you for sharing your story and how Mr. P helped you. These are comforting words. May you continue to look forward to your new adventures and to enjoy them.

Mrs. Phillips, his wife

DeVern Phillips - March 01, 2021 at 04:22 PM

JP

“ *Dear Rebecca, Family & Friends,
We worked many years with DeVern at the Department of Agriculture. I remember him always stopping by Central Office to say hi and see how everyone was doing, and David remembers him from numerous meetings, and was a Facebook friend in recent years. Such a joyful and kind man. We are so sorry for your loss!
With Sympathy,
David & Julie Pope*

Julie Pope - February 25, 2021 at 03:18 PM



Dave and Julie Pope, I remember you both. Thank you for sharing how you knew DeVern and for the kind words.

Becky, DeVern's wife

DeVern Phillips - March 01, 2021 at 04:23 PM

TH

“ Mr. Phillips was my 6th grade teacher at Jay Shideler and is one of my most memorable educators. He would play 60's music while we did homework or projects, taught us new “big words” every week (I specifically remember learning about the word “plethora”), taught a class on basic manners every Friday, and cried while telling the story of their daughter's adoption. It was apparent he deeply cared about his students and the type of education we were receiving, as well as his family. My deepest condolences to you all.

Timeri Herrington - February 22, 2021 at 10:33 PM

RP

Thank you for your condolences and for sharing your positive experiences as one of Mr. P's students. Mrs. Phillips, his wife

Rebecca Phillips - February 24, 2021 at 12:04 AM

CD

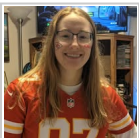
“ Devern was so playful with his fellow teachers. My speech room shared a wall with his 6th grade classroom. He loved to pound on the wall we shared to get a rise out of me. I have so much respect for this man!!!

Cindy Doerr - February 22, 2021 at 07:18 PM

RP

Cindy, thank you for sharing and for the respect you gave him. Sincerely, Becky Phillips, his wife

Rebecca Phillips - February 24, 2021 at 12:06 AM



“ I'll always be thankful for all that Mr. P did for me. Though it has been a decade since I was in his classroom, I know he was and probably will always be my best and favorite teacher. He always showed everyone respect, even addressing students by their last names in the classroom. He truly cared for all that passed through his door even long after they left, just as we continued to care about him. Mr. P, you and your family are in my thoughts.

Miss Spoon



JennyLou Spoon - February 22, 2021 at 03:10 PM

TP

Becky, I first met Devern when I was a Jr. In high school. You and I go back to Jr. High. Our love and prayers for you and your family. Tom & Snowda Powell

Tom Powell - February 22, 2021 at 05:20 PM

RP

Tom and Snowda, thank you for your love and prayers. Love in Christ, Becky

Rebecca Phillips - February 24, 2021 at 12:09 AM

RP

JennyLou, Mr. P was so proud of you and delighted he shared in part of your desires to write. Thank you for sharing and keeping in touch with him following your graduation. Sincerely, Becky, his wife

Rebecca Phillips - February 24, 2021 at 12:13 AM

RR

Becky I sent a check to Western Hills Church this morning. If you get any extra hard copy photo of DeVern and you like the one you sent out on facebook that you both are featured in I would love to have it for my collection. A 5 x 7 would be great. Thanks. ROD

Rod Ruch - February 27, 2021 at 12:07 PM



Rod, as DeVern's cousin, thank you for the donation to the Elsie Banks Education Memorial Fund. This was in honor of Devern's maternal grandmother, Ruth's mother. You assisted verbally and physically getting our country home for sale in record time! You stripped the wall paper and painted DeVern's bathroom in our new home. It became the "bear" bathroom with a Grizz sign on the door. Both of us were delighted you, Joan, Jane and her 2 lovely granddaughters came to our 50th anniversary gathering. Do keep me posted about you and your family. I shall try to send you the picture of us and one of DeVern.

DeVern Phillips - March 01, 2021 at 04:42 PM

CE

Becky and family, so sorry for the lost of your husband . Our prayers are with you and the family at this very difficult time in your life. We know he will be greatly missed. love in Christ 🙏

*Your neighbors
Jim & Carol Ellis*

Carol Ellis - March 22, 2021 at 09:54 PM

AL

“ Becky, my prayers are with you during this difficult time. DeVern was such a sweet, caring person. He is greatly missed. God Bless You, Becky. Love, Alice

Alice - February 22, 2021 at 02:40 PM

RP

Alive, thank you for your sincere comments.

Rebecca Phillips - February 24, 2021 at 12:14 AM

RP

Alice, I apologize for the typo error. Becky

Rebecca Phillips - February 24, 2021 at 12:34 AM

BP

“ *I am forever grateful to God for weaving Devern and Becky into my life for the last twenty some years! I will never forget or take for granted the journey they took with me as my precious husband, Phil, was fighting his battle ..they even drove up to Mayo Clinic in Rochester, MN. to sit with me during his last big surgery And that big hearted, mountain of a man, even showed up with a shaved head in solidarity under the mistaken idea my hubby had chemo ! THAT was DeVern ! And after Phil's passing he and Becky were right there with me and my family any time they were needed. God Bless you and your family, Becky, as the love and prayers continue . He will forever be missed deeply and his presence felt in our memories of the laughter and love he brought ! God be with you, you are never alone.*

Becky Palmer - February 22, 2021 at 02:39 PM



Becky, thank you for this tribute to DeVern. He would say that's what friends do for their family. Love, Becky

DeVern Phillips - February 23, 2021 at 04:26 PM

CB

“ *Rebecca, Crystal and other Family & Friends, DeVern was a special friend from our THS Class of 64 !! We'll miss him so much and I'll never forget his sense of humor !!! DeVern was always a people person, taking a real interest in everyone. I was thrilled when we connected thru the W.U. International Studies program and I got to visit with you, Rebecca, and realized instantly that DeVern had married a sweet soul. He deserved you, since he was such a great guy. His self-written obit. was SO Devern. His suffering is over and we all know he is Up Yonder. Bless his soul ****

Chrystal Brim - February 21, 2021 at 05:52 PM

RP

Chrystal, thank you for sharing your uplifting words. Love in Christ, Becky, DeVern's wife

Rebecca Phillips - February 24, 2021 at 12:16 AM

RG

“ *RIP. My son Patrick and Crystal gave him 2 handsome loving grandchildren. Sleep with the lord and watch over your loved ones.*

ron and mary griffitt - February 21, 2021 at 05:22 PM

RP

Ron and Mary, yes, we share two wonderful grandsons. Love in Christ, Becky

Rebecca Phillips - February 24, 2021 at 12:19 AM

BS

“ *I was in high school with DaVern, worked on reunions with him and will miss him at our class lunches when we can gather again. I will always remember his love of a good story--told or heard. May God bless you and your family. Barbara Warren Salyer*

Barbara Salyer - February 21, 2021 at 05:00 PM

RP

Barbara, thank you for sharing. I am glad you could enjoy some of DeVern's stories. Love in Christ, Becky, his wife

Rebecca Phillips - February 24, 2021 at 12:21 AM

RP

“ *I didn't know DeVern that well but had the wonderful pleasure of knowing and working with his wife. She was always Rebecca to me as my name is also Becky. It was always wonderful to go into her classroom and see her joy in teaching. I am sending my thoughts and prayers to Rebecca and her family. I know what this is like and the comfort of giving her loss over to God.*

Becky Perdue

Rebecca J Perdue - February 21, 2021 at 04:13 PM

RP

Becky, thank you for sharing. We both were blessed with husbands who loved us. Love in Christ, Becky

Rebecca Phillips - February 24, 2021 at 12:23 AM

SF

“ *Oh the stories! Never a dull moment with this wonderful humorous and loveable man. Becky and family, sending all my love and heartfelt condolences. DeVern will always be in my heart and fondest memories.*

Sandy Flickinger - February 21, 2021 at 12:26 PM

RP

Sandy, you are so right. Thank you for sharing. Love in Christ, Becky

Rebecca Phillips - February 24, 2021 at 12:25 AM

AD

“ *Devern had both my daughters in his 6th grade classroom (3 years apart). He made learning fun and effective for them with his storytelling. Meanwhile, he encouraged me in my studies at Washburn to be a teacher. He shared his notes and ideas with me. He was encouraging and supportive...a true teacher at heart.*

Amy Deason - February 21, 2021 at 09:53 AM

RP

Amy, thank you for sharing. I am glad you were the recipient of DeVern's encouraging words. Sincerely, Becky, his wife

Rebecca Phillips - February 24, 2021 at 12:28 AM



“ *DeVern, your stories and wisdom shared as a fellow educator will be cherished and missed. You made a difference. Thinking of Becky and family. The world is a better place because you were in it.*

Peace to you and family.

Eddie & Jeannie Fairchild

Jeannie Fairchild - February 21, 2021 at 08:30 AM

RP

Ed and Jennie, thank you for sharing your kind words. Love in Christ, Becky

Rebecca Phillips - February 24, 2021 at 12:30 AM



“ *Rest in Peace, DeVern. You lived well, loved fully, and were loved by many. My prayers for Becky, Crystal, and all of DeVern's family and friends are for comfort and peace.*

Terri Good

Terri Good - February 20, 2021 at 06:40 PM

RP

Terri, thank you for reaching out to us. Love in Christ, Becky

Rebecca Phillips - February 24, 2021 at 12:31 AM



“ 1 file added to the album *Memories Album*



Kevin Brennan Family Funeral Home - February 19, 2021 at 04:45 PM