



Dr. "Joe" McFarland

July 25, 1929 - February 4, 2012

Dr. "Joe" McFarland William Joseph McFarland, President Emeritus of Geneva College, rose to join his Lord on January 27 at age 82. He was born July 25, 1929, in Sterling, Kansas. He grew up as the oldest of three boys in Quinter, Kansas, where his father was a minister during the depression and "Dust Bowl" days. He joined the Reformed Presbyterian Church as a young man and was a life-long member. He attended Jr. High School and High School in Topeka before his family moved to Sterling, Kansas, where he finished high school and graduated from Sterling College. He was a five-sport letterman while in college. He graduated from college in 1951, was inducted into the Army that summer, and married his high school sweetheart, Roberta Dill, while en-route to Korea that same year. They remained devoted and much in love for 60 years and raised three children. He spent 16 months in Korea, half of that housed in tents, and was awarded a Presidential Unit Citation and three bronze service stars. Upon his discharge from the Army in 1953, he began a unique educational career that spanned all levels from public school classrooms through that of college president. During six years at Turon, Kansas, he served as 6th grade teacher, Jr. High Coach and Elementary Principal; coached and taught at the High School; and became Superintendent of Schools. In 1959, he joined the staff of Emporia State University where he served in a variety of teaching and administrative positions culminating as Head of the Elementary Department. In 1966, he accepted the position of Associate Executive Officer of the Kansas State

Teachers Association (K-NEA) in Topeka, and four years later became Director of Academic Affairs for the Kansas Board of Regents...a position he held for 14 years...including six months as Interim Executive Officer. In 1984, he was named President of Geneva College, Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania, where he served until his retirement in 1992. In retirement, he served a year in Taiwan as Consultant to the President of Christ's College and later spent a term in Cyprus as Headmaster of the American Academy in Nicosia. Joe was active in both church and community affairs throughout his life. Many of his activities have been chronicled in his autobiography, "My Time on the Clock: The Shaping of a College President." Remarkably fit until late in life, he officiated high school and college football games for 50 years, and was inducted into the Topeka Official's Association "Hall of Fame" in 2010. He made his first parachute jump at age 70 and his second at age 80; was "Tri-state Senior Olympic Champion" in the javelin; and claimed a hole-in-one in golf. In frequent demand as a public speaker, he was a master of self-deprecating wit. He was Master of Ceremonies for the Governor's State Prayer Breakfast for over a decade; served as an Elder in his church; was active in the Downtown Topeka Rotary Club; taught a Businessman's Bible Study group of 30 men; Chaired the Governor's Commission on School to Work; held a private pilot's license for 25 years; Chaired the Kansas Aerospace Education Commission; and was listed in Who's Who in America for over 30 years. He earned his M.A. Degree from the University of Northern Colorado and his Doctorate from Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana. He was honored to receive the Sterling High School "Black Bear Alumni Award;" the Indiana University "Teaching Associate Award;" the Sterling College "Distinguished Service Award": an Honorary Doctorate of Letters from Sterling College; and an Honorary Doctorate of Literature from Geneva College. He is survived by his wife of 60 years. Two sons, Bill and Matt, a daughter and son-in-law, Kathy and Tim Gardner, all of Topeka, a brother and sister-in-law, Rev. Robert and Georgia McFarland, also of Topeka and a sister-in-law, Siola McFarland, Holland, Michigan. He is also survived by three grand-children:

Sarah Muehler (Brandon), Rachel and Hannah Gardner and many nieces, nephews, and cousins . He was predeceased by his father Dr. A. J. McFarland, his mother Sylvia Hutcheson McFarland and a younger brother Rev. Armour J. McFarland. The family is requesting, in lieu of flowers, donations be considered to Geneva College, Sterling College or the Topeka Reformed Presbyterian Church. Graveside services will be held at 11am, Thursday, February 2, at the Sterling Cemetery, Sterling, KS. A memorial service will be held at 10:30 am, Saturday, February 4, at the Topeka Reformed Presbyterian Church, 8345 SW 33rd Street, Topeka. Friends may greet the family before and following the memorial service.

Tribute Wall



“ *Dr. "Joe" McFarland*

January 28, 2023 at 12:08 PM



“ *I was saddened to learn today at the TARSP meeting that Joe had passed away. My prayers go to you Roberta and your children. Joe was so special, the best tour guide Cappers ever had!! Loved working with you both! I know how close you both were and how hard it will be for you, but the Lord is able and Joe is with his Lord! He was such a special delight to know. My prayers are with you!*

Oneta Ashcraft - February 06, 2012 at 06:47 PM



I also love Roberta and Joe McFarland. I was their student of Christ College Taiwan.

Michelle Chang - June 08, 2024 at 02:04 AM



“ *Roberta & family,
So sorry for your loss. May the great memories of your years together be of comfort to you during the days & weeks ahead. You are in our prayers.
Bob & Kerry Storey*

Kerry Storey - February 04, 2012 at 10:34 AM

GD

“ *Mrs. McFarland and Family:*

It was a great privilege to know Dr. McFarland and to work with him in his service to young people as a KSHSAA sports official. A few years ago, it was my honor to present him a 50 year plaque commemorating his career of serving Kansas schools and students. I know how proud he was of working with his sons as an officiating crew. Our staff also appreciated the key role he played in the annual Governor's Prayer Breakfast. He will be dearly missed but we are all better for having known him. Please accept our heartfelt sympathy.

Gary Musselman, KSHSAA Executive Director - February 03, 2012 at 09:07 AM

MM

“ *Roberta and family,*

Joe will certainly be missed, especially his many witty stories and emails. Plus, his leadership at The Topeka Fellowship (men's bible study) was wonderful.

Thanks for sharing him with us!

Mitch Miller

Mitch Miller - February 01, 2012 at 12:23 PM

OU

“ *Dear Roberta and Family: I always appreciated Doctor McFarland's warm greetings and his inspiration. He left a wonderful legacy for all of us. My most sincere sympathy as you continue to deal with his loss.*

Olive Ubel

Olive Ubel - February 01, 2012 at 10:20 AM

JB

“ So sorry to hear of your loss Mr. McFarland - what a remarkable man he was. You and your family are in my thoughts and prayers.

*Jodi
(Auburn Jr. High)*

Jodi Johnson Ball - February 01, 2012 at 10:19 AM

SH

“ Matt & family,
...am so sorry to hear of the loss of your dad, know that your family is in my prayers.

Sandi Haas - January 29, 2012 at 07:14 PM

TF

“ Kathy, we want to express our most sincerely sorrow in the passing of your father. I know that he will be truly missed as he served many with his spiritual presence. He gave so much as demonstrated in his life history. We, the Jones family, hope that God's love and comfort will help see you and your family through this difficult time. Our thoughts and prayers are with you. God Bless

The Jones Family - January 28, 2012 at 07:09 PM

TF

“ Kathy, we want to express our most sincerely sorrow in the passing of your father. I know that he will be truly missed as he served many with his spiritual presence. He gave so much as demonstrated in his life history. We, the Jones family, hope that God's love and comfort will heop see you and your family through this difficult time. Our thoughts and prayers are with you. God Bless

The Jones Family - January 28, 2012 at 07:07 PM

MW

“ *Roberta and family,
Our sincere condolences. Joe was a man we
all admired. He lived his life as gentleman
with dignity and a genuine love of his fellow
man. He will be greatly missed.*

Mary Lou & Lee Williams - January 28, 2012 at 01:11 PM

JS

“ *Dr. McFarland came to Geneva at a very difficult time. His gifts of
leadership, friendliness, Godly example, and dry humor made it
possible for him to unite a divided institution and move Geneva
forward. As in Ephesians 4, he was the Lord Jesus' gift to Geneva.
A man of many abilities and interests, he was a valued friend and a
cordial and sympathetic boss.
We mourn his passing, but rejoice that he has received his welcome
as a good and faithful servant.*

John Schaefer - January 28, 2012 at 09:40 AM

RS

“ *McFarland Family, I am sure that your loved one is sitting joyfully
with our Lord, looking upon us with His heart bursting with Love and
Joy now that He is finally Home. May all the heart warming
memories get ALL of the Family through this time sorrow as you
celebrate His Life.*

Rebecca Schiefelbein - January 28, 2012 at 09:18 AM

RJ

“ *I have fawn memories of Joe while he lived in Topeka and later as
president of Geneva College. May the Lord be gracious to Roberta,
their children and the rest of the family. He will be greatly missed.*

Ralph Joseph - January 27, 2012 at 03:56 PM