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In Memory of George W. Brown
by Neal Ratzlaff

NOU member, supporter and friend George Brown passed away on February 9, 2002, at the age of 80 following a 10 year battle with leukemia.

His many contributions to this organization include service as President on two occasions, 1974-5 and 1992-4. Some of us remember smaller but equally memorable contributions, including the flower arrangements, gifts from George's garden, that appeared on the tables at our Halsey Fall Field Days; his wonderful stories and good humor; his personal thriftiness which he applied with equal vigor to the NOU budget; and his love of only the most brief and concise presentations. The latter was not lost on George's pastor, whose comments at his memorial service included: "There is another visual that I guess I missed... when the preacher was preaching too long, his arm and his wristwatch went higher and higher."

George was born on September 24, 1921. He spent his youth in Minden and graduated from Minden High School in 1939. He began college, but World War II intervened and George entered the United States Army Air Force, serving as a C-47 cargo plane pilot in Africa and India. Following the war he returned to Kearney State College where he received his degree.

The delightful George and Marian team so evident at many NOU meetings was formed on June 1, 1947, when he and Marian Wardrop were married. To this union four children were born: Gary, Randy, Linda and Laurie. He is also survived by 10 grandchildren and a great-granddaughter.

George was an educator. After short terms at Silver Creek, Oxford and Gibbon, he came to Kearney High School in 1950. Here he taught biology and served as a coach for some 33 years before retiring in 1983. George and Marian must have been good role models. The Brown family was recently featured in the Nebraska State Education Association magazine *The Voice* in a feature titled "Family of Teachers" relating that all family members are teachers or former teachers. George was also honored as outstanding retired teacher for Kearney Public Schools.

The Kearney First Methodist Church, where he was a member for over 50 years, was an important part of his life. He served in many roles, including church board member, building committee member, Sunday School teacher, Methodist Youth Fellowship sponsor, Boy Scout leader and Elderhostel teacher. The Brown family also was honored as Methodist Family of the Year.

His interest in nature and conservation was not limited to birds or to the NOU. He was a charter member of the Big Bend Audubon Society and also served as its president. Woodcarving was another way in which he expressed his love of nature, and some NOU members likely still possess a Sandhill Crane carving which he produced. He loved gardening and was a recipient of the Kearney Sertoma Yard of the Month Award. His contributions to church and community were recognized by *The Kearney Hub's* Freedom Award for Volunteer Service.

George especially loved eagles. In fact, the headstone which he chose is graced by the figures of two Bald Eagles. When Marian observed that the eagles did not appear to look very happy, he replied in true George Brown fashion: "Have you ever seen a smiling eagle?" Perhaps not, but George's spirit, which now surely soars with and among them, must have them all smiling.

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