

# William "Bill" Mills Watkins

## 1939-2020

On Thursday, November 12, 2020, William "Bill" Mills Watkins of Arnold, NE, passed away after a month-long battle with Covid-19 at the age of 81 at the Good Samaritan Hospital in Kearney surrounded by family.

Bill, fondly called Billy in his early years, was born on October 16, 1939, in Arnold, NE, to Lowell and Arvilla (Mills) Watkins. He attended the Logan Country School through 8th grade and then continued his education at Arnold Public Schools, graduating in 1957. During high school he enjoyed participating in successful Cardinal football, basketball, and track teams, boys glee, drama, and Arnold Legion baseball. Bill then attended the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, where he majored in Animal Husbandry and received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Agriculture. Before he graduated from the university in 1962, Bill was both a member and executive officer of Delta Upsilon Fraternity, as well as a member of the University judging team and the UNL Block and Bridle Club.

During his college years, Bill enlisted as a member of the Nebraska National Guard. In 1958 Bill completed basic training at Fort Leonard Wood, MO. He was honorably discharged as a Staff Sergeant after six years of service on September 1, 1964. Bill returned to the farm in 1962, where he became the 3rd generation to take over the farm and ranch located in Logan County. He remained in partnership with his dad until 1973 when his parents retired and moved to town.

Nothing was more important to Bill than his beloved wife, Carolyn Ann Farrar. Bill believed one of his greatest achievements in life was Carolyn choosing to sit by him (instead of his friend) on their first blind date. Bill and Carolyn were married on June 21, 1964, in North Platte, NE, and were nearly inseparable for the next 56 years. Together they raised two children - John Michael Watkins and Renee Lynn Watkins. After living nearby for a few years, Bill and his family moved to the Watkins home place where the operation still runs today. Bill and Carolyn worked to-

gether to expand the farm and grow their cattle herd. Through the years their herd shifted from Hereford to Black Angus and Bill took pride in finishing quality cattle. Important to Bill was being a good steward of the land and he relished the 12 years he served on the Producers Livestock Board. He considered passing on the Watkins Farm & Ranch to his family to be one of his greatest legacies.

Bill was a community-based and involved man. A member of the Arnold United Methodist Church for over 68 years, he attended the church his whole life and faithfully served in many administrative positions. Bill's faith was the guide for his life. His advice to all was to know the Lord and follow his ways. Just like his mother, Bill appreciated music, loved singing in the choir and men's group, and playing the piano. He also was a member of Masons. He served as the local lodge Master and received his 50-year pin in 2015. Bill was active with the Arnold Roping Club and played softball and town team basketball. Throughout his lifetime, he enjoyed golfing and bowling with friends and family. Competitive games of ping pong and pool were also favorite pastimes as were outings to the lake.

Bill shared that his best days have been watching his children and grandchildren in all of their endeavors. He loved nothing more than attending and supporting his family at their various school and athletic events. Although he has remained a faithful Cornhusker follower, his recent years have been focused on the South Loup Bobcats as a loyal fan - his presence in the stands and at the finish line will be greatly missed.

Friends were an important part of his life, as Bill surrounded himself with trustworthy, loyal, and honest people. Bill himself was a genuine man. He always enjoyed a good conversation, as he could easily find something to talk about with anyone. He had a mischievous side and lit up every room with both his presence and infectious laugh. Bill loved to tell stories and share the history of the area and the family ranch. He was kind, gen-



tle, and humble. Bill will be remembered as a light-footed dancer, an avid card player, and a sharply dressed gentleman. He was a hard-working farmer who was quick to lend a hand and sincerely valued people.

Bill is preceded in death by his parents, Lowell and Arvilla Watkins, infant sister Wylene Watkins, and in-laws Lynn and Lorraine Farrar. Bill is survived by his wife of 56 years, Carolyn Watkins, son John (Beth) Watkins of Derby, KS, daughter Renee (Ted) Bubak of Arnold, NE, granddaughters Sarah Watkins of Wichita, KS, Anna Watkins of Kansas City, KS, and Jadeyn Bubak of Arnold, NE, grandson Leighton Bubak at the University of Nebraska - Lincoln, brother Joe (Bonnie) Watkins of Grand Island, NE, and numerous wonderful in-laws, nephews, nieces, and cousins.

Bill's Celebration of Life service at the Arnold United Methodist Church on Wednesday, November 18 at 1:30 p.m. will be for the family. A graveside service at 2:30 p.m. at the Arnold Cemetery will be open for all to be followed by fellowship time at the nearby Arnold Golf Course. We sincerely encourage each person to make your decision about attendance based on the best interest of your health and that of your community. Please wear a mask. Visitation was available on Tuesday, November 17th from 3:00 - 7:00 pm at the Arnold Funeral Home. Memorials are suggested to one of the following: Arnold School Foundation, Arnold Community Foundation, Arnold United Methodist Church. Words of encouragement and remembrance may be left at [www.govierbrothers.com/obituary/william-watkins](http://www.govierbrothers.com/obituary/william-watkins). The service will be livestreamed, and the memory video may be viewed on the Govier Brothers Mortuary site at [www.govierbrothers.com](http://www.govierbrothers.com)