



Joseph "Joe" E. Pless

October 12, 1927 - March 5, 2017

Joseph Edward Pless of Wenatchee, a confident rebel who took life by storm, loved his family beyond description, ran his classroom with discipline and grace, died March 5th, 2017 at the age of 89.

Making his way into the world on his grandmother's dining room table in Cle Elum, WA October 12, 1927, Joe was never about fanfare. He graduated from Ellensburg High School in 1946 and headed straight off to serve his country during world War 2 and the occupation in Japan. Upon his return home he resumed his education at Central Washington College of Education where he graduated from in 1951. Education was a vital part of his life throughout his upbringing. Joe earned his Bachelor's of Education and launched right into teaching and coaching. Connecting with students and staff alike, his passion for education was unrivaled.

At the advice of a close friend, Joe agreed to a blind date where he met the love of his life, Ann. Their courtship lasted but a minute before they were married and moved to Cheney, WA where Joe endeavored to earn his Master's in Education with an emphasis on Outdoor Education. There were late night study sessions, papers typed with carbon paper, and many pots of coffee consumed in order to endure the rigors of a successful completion of Eastern Washington State Colleges' master's program. In August of 1970, Joe graduated and with fervor he and Ann stepped into the next phase of their life together.

Both Joe and Ann were offered teaching positions in the Wenatchee valley.

“Yes” was a foregone conclusion. Complete with their dreams and canine companion, they moved from Cheney to Wenatchee and embarked on their new careers eventually making it home for their soon to be family. Joe and Ann raised two daughters on “the ranch” in Sunnyslope where Joe had an apple orchard. An animal lover at heart, Joe’s family also included anywhere from 2 to 5 dogs and 3 to 19 cats at any given time.

Teaching and coaching for more than 3 decades, Joe’s role in shaping and changing lives of students he taught continues today. He is best know for teaching 6th grade at Washington Elementary School. He was a leader among his colleagues, a teacher in and outside the classroom and a parent figure to many of his students. When Joe wasn’t “borrowing (without permission)” a school bus to take his 6th graders fishing for an outdoor education lesson, Joe spent his weekends hunting and fishing with his loyal canines. Throughout the course of Joe’s outdoor escapades, he successfully hunted grouse, quail, duck, pheasant, deer, elk, antelope, buffalo and caribou. The one that got away was a bear. While Joe enjoyed hunting with modern fire arms, he was an avid muzzle loader, buckskins and all. He enjoyed rendezvous all over the state meeting up with other muzzle loaders for competition shooting. While Joe did exceedingly well at these competitions, one would never know given his humble spirit.

Living on with the spirit of Joe are his three daughters. Jane Pless of Blaine, WA, Julie Pless of Tucson, AZ, and Kim Block of Medford, OR. His wife Ann predeceased him in 2014.

If you care to make a donation in Joe’s honor, please donate to the Wenatchee Valley Humane Society, Wenatcheehumane.org or 509-662-9577. A service celebrating Joe Pless is being held on Tuesday March 14, 2017 at 11 AM. Jones & Jones-Betts Memorial Chapel is where we will gather. Please join us. Please express your thoughts and memories on the online guest book at jonesjonesbetts.com. Arrangements are by Jones & Jones – Betts Funeral Home.

Previous Events

Memorial Service

MAR 14. 11:00 AM (PT)

Jones & Jones ~ Betts Funeral Home
302 9thStreet
Wenatchee, WA 98801
(509) 662-1561
dante@jonesjonesbetts.com

Tribute Wall



“ Jones & Jones - Betts Funeral Home created a Tribute Video in memory of Joseph "Joe" E. Pless



Jones & Jones~Betts Funeral Home - March 08, 2017 at 06:00 PM

KV

“ Mr. Pless was my sixth grade teacher forty years ago. I moved to Wenatchee two months into the school year and didn't know anyone at school. Mr. Pless was incredibly warm and helpful. He made a big impact on me in a way that few teachers have. I have thought about him all my life. One particular lesson that he taught inspired me to learn survival skills as an adult. I now teach young people essential life skills for self sufficiency in challenging situations. Today, I decided to look him up and discovered he passed away four years ago. I wish I had reached out sooner to thank him for being such a wonderful teacher. Some people leave their mark in indelible ways. Thank you Mr. Pless.

Kelly V. - February 05, 2021 at 10:57 AM

DM

“ I had him as a teacher in 1959 at Shorewood Elementary and one time he ripped a phonebook in half

Doug McFarlane - September 16, 2019 at 10:48 PM

RB

“ I first met Joe in 1960 when we joined Evergreen Tennis Club. I was splashing around in the pool one day and the lifeguard (Donna Cassidy) asked why I wasn't on the swim team. I told her I couldn't swim that well, so she went and got a stopwatch and told me to swim as fast as I could to the other end of the pool. So I splashed my way down to the other end whereupon she told me I passed the test and that practice was at 8 AM "sharp" the next day. As it turned out, I probably could have walked down to the other end...

I showed up at 8:05 the next morning and met Coach Joe Pless. He reminded me that I was late and to jump in and give him 2 laps of "butterfly". I told him I had no idea what that was so he pointed to the team's best butterflyer and said "go". I struggled down to the other end of the pool and promptly threw-up because I ate breakfast 30 minutes before! And so I had my first lesson in paying attention and, as it turned out, appreciating Joe's approach to motivating us younger blobs of humanity. By the end of that summer I could swim like a fish and was helping Donna teach the "bubble blowers" to not fear the water...

One Fall, Joe took several of us camping to his cabin at Lake Kachess. He introduced us to the forest and the critters there-in. I think the main reason he brought us along was to help an elderly couple install support posts in their cabin in preparation for winter. We were always learning something from Joe...

The last time I saw Joe was in the late 70's or early 80's while on a hiking trip in the North Cascades. I called Joe to see if they were up for a short visit and, of course, got invited for dinner. As we left, I told him that he had helped set me on a solid course for the rest of my life (Nuclear Navy, college, Master's Degree and a career in Safety Management).

Thanks Joe!

Robert Beveridge - September 12, 2018 at 12:48 PM

LM

“ I worked at Countryside Veterinary for 11 years. I loved Joe and Ann. I was the highlight of our day when Joe came in with his latest story. Being a cat person, Wendall was my favorite. He would keep me company on the nights that I closed. I was there when he was put to sleep. I now have a cat named Wendall in honor of him. Our community lost a great person with Joe's passing. I'll never forget him and the impact he had on my life.



Louise McEwen - March 13, 2017 at 01:01 PM

LJ

“ Laura Jaecks lit a candle in memory of Joseph "Joe" E. Pless



Laura Jaecks - March 07, 2017 at 03:33 PM

LJ

Mr. Pless were my first teacher in Wenatchee. I joined your class mid-year in the 6th grade and missed outdoor ed. camp. Having moved here from another continent I knew nothing about the wildlife and forest plants I was required to write reports on. I'm sure my work was awful but somehow you made everyday fun to be at school. You taught us with humor and good character. You will always be a much beloved favorite to me.

My condolences to your family.

Laura J.

Laura Jaecks - March 07, 2017 at 03:38 PM

KC

What a wonderful teacher. I had him in 6th grade. He always had a smile and an encouraging word for a student who was smart but didn't always fit in with the crowd. He is part of the reason I became a teacher

*My thoughts and prayers are with his family
Kathy Copp*

Kathy Copp - March 08, 2017 at 10:26 AM

DT

The video tribute is an incredible portrayal of the love of Joe and Ann, for no matter where he roamed, along streams and through the woods, he always came home to the secure love of Ann. Joe "saved me", at a crucial turning point, in 1960 when I took a life-saving class he taught at Red Shield Pool, in White Center. I worked for him lifeguarding and teaching swimming for the next three years. Joe gave me responsibilities and expected an excellence that I did not know I was capable of. . . but he did. I thrived under his tutelage and mentoring, that has defined my entire life. My friendship and love for Ann and Joe was like a

home coming each time I saw them. RIP my DEAR FRIENDS, as God has brought you together once again. . . I can hear the laughter and feel the JOY.

*My love and prayers to Kim, Jane & Julie.
Donna (Cassidy) Thomas*

Donna (Cassidy) Thomas - March 10, 2017 at 03:48 PM



Mr. Pless was my first teacher after moving here from Alaska in 1976. I have many memories from that year but the one that stands out the most was watching Mr. Pless, who was missing part of his thumb, rip a Seattle phonebook in half in front of a classroom full of astonished 6th graders.

Kelly McNair - March 12, 2017 at 01:50 PM

SE

My husband, Jerry and I, met Joe and Ann while on the staff at Washington Elementary School in Wenatchee. We spent the next years enjoying their friendship on Friday nights gathered with friends (Chuck & Rita Degman, Ed & Myrna Hewitt, Gib & Charlene Edwards, Jerry & Sonja Yeager) around the tables playing pinochle or other board games. Joe kept things lively with his wonderful sense of humor and his integrity as a great friend. He contributed sooo much to the Outdoor Education program at WA Elementary. Joe will be missed!

Sonja Yeager - March 26, 7:11 PM

Sonja Yeager - March 29, 2017 at 09:13 PM