

PVT Neil C. Koeneman

Location - West-A: R19, C30

Neil Koenman

OSHKOSH - Neil Koeneman, born to Oscar and Yvonne (Fassbender) Koenmann of Minnesota, and longtime advocate for outdoor recreation, physical education, and environmental preservation, passed on peacefully from congestive heart failure following a surgery at AngelsGrace Hospice in Oconomowoc on November 28, 2020. Neil was 87 years old.

Neil married Patricia (Ganzel) Fabrello and the marriage ended in 1980. He is survived by his daughter, Shari Ann Rodeen (Jeff), sons Bradley Koeneman, and Brian Koeneman, six grandchildren and one great grandchild. He is further survived by his loving life-partner of 21 years, Jacquelyn Mueller.

Neil and Jacquelyn, also a retired schoolteacher, met while paddling down the Wisconsin River, merging their love of nature. Neil became a part of Jaci's family as her daughters, Rebecca Bain and Elizabeth Wartenluft (Joe), and their children and grandchildren embraced him as their father/grandfather-figure.

Neil and Jaci loved to travel together. They visited Russia, including the Far East of Siberia, cruised Alaska and the Arctic Circle, kayaked Mexico's Baja Peninsula, snorkeled in Galapagos Islands, trekked hut-to-hut in Switzerland, Germany, and Italy, and visited dozens more locations.

Neil graduated from Oshkosh High School in 1951. Upon graduation, he hitchhiked to La Crosse with a wool blanket and a backpack. He enrolled at University of Wisconsin La Crosse in 1952, paying his tuition with the cash in his pocket. During sophomore year, he was drafted to serve in the US Army in the Korean War. Neil participated in track & field at UW La Crosse, where he graduated. He earned his master's degree from University of Northern Colorado in 1971. He taught physical education in Shell Lake, WI, and returned home to Oshkosh where he worked as Assistant Recreation Director. He then taught physical education for Oshkosh Elementary Schools until retirement.



Neil introduced his three children and countless others to the joys of outdoor sports and natural simplicity. He was resourceful, easy-going, good-natured, and generous. For all his time in the water, he rightly earned the nickname "Nautical Neil". He enjoyed spending time at a small cabin in Hazelhurst, which he built in 1972. His superior woodworking craftsmanship spurred him to build unique wooden creations, most of which he gave away. Neil opened his home to many as a place for them to get through difficult times, whether they could afford rent or not. One of Neil's goals was to bicycle across the U.S. He rode from Bar Harbor Maine to Western, MT. However, the years caught up with him and he never completed the final leg to Oregon. Yet, his efforts, as in anything, were nothing short of valiant. His son, Brian, plans to continue the last leg in Neil's honor.

Neil's reputation for progressive ideas were known around Oshkosh. Neil was immensely popular and enjoyed Friday night fish fries with Jaci and friends who joked he could be elected mayor by the number of people who'd stop to chat. Jaci and Neil enjoyed reading literature, listening to classical music, dancing, and watching Wisconsin Public TV together. Jaci was Neil's loving and primary caregiver as he recovered from cancer, a stroke, and ultimately his death in late November of 2020.

Neil was proud to be a member and past president of the Wisconsin Association of Physical Education Health and Dance. He was a member for 60 years.

Contributions in Neil's memory can be made to St. Andrew's Lutheran Church at 1100 E Murdock Ave. Oshkosh, WI and the Honor Flight Network enabling Veterans of the Korean War, WWII, and the Vietnam era to visit their memorials in Washington D.C. A spring military service will be planned in Oshkosh, WI as well as a private remembrance on Lake Seventeen in Northern WI.

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