

Hiawatha , KS



Harold Sommers, 85, of Hiawatha died Sunday morning, February 14, 2016 at The Pines Care Center in Hiawatha.

He was born in Hiawatha, Kansas on April 21, 1930 to Harry and Florence Buckley Sommers. After graduating from Highland High School in 1948, he received an Associates degree from Highland Community College. He attended numerous military schools including Vietnamese Language School in Ft Bliss, Texas, and Command and General Staff College in Leavenworth.

Harold married Marilyn Keebler on March 6, 1955. Their first year of marriage was enjoyed on the island of Oahu, Hawaii where he was stationed at Scofield Barracks. Harold and Marilyn moved from Hawaii to Robinson in April of 1956 and bought a farm, which marked the start of a 40 year farming career until their retirement in 1996 to Hiawatha. Last March, they celebrated 60 years of marriage.

He was preceded in death by his parents, and sister Maxine. Survivors include his wife Marilyn, and their three children: Brad (Jane) Sommers of Robinson, Brian (Melody) Sommers of Denver, Co; and Susan Sommers (Larry Roeder) of Hiawatha. Six grandchildren - Matt, Laura, Kyla, Kari, Keith and Kaleb held a special place in his heart, as well as many nieces and nephews.

Harold was active in the Highland and Hiawatha communities. He was a lifelong member of the Highland Christian Church where he served as elder and Chairman of the Board. Affiliations include Smithton Masonic Lodge #1, AF&AM, of Highland and past master, Robinson Farmer's Coop Board, and Hiawatha Hospital Board. Harold obtained private, commercial, and instrument pilot ratings; and held an aerial photography contract for 22 counties with USDA for eight years. Other hobbies included being an accomplished photographer, building ham radio equipment, woodworking, hunting and trap shooting, water and snow skiing, and the pursuit of technical knowledge. Over the course of his life, Harold traveled to all 50 states and three continents. His positive attitude, sense of humor, and readiness to help others endured throughout his life.

Brigadier General Sommers enlisted in the Kansas Army National Guard in 1951, receiving a

direct commission to Second Lieutenant in 1952 in Headquarters Battery, 154th Field Artillery. He was ordered to active duty during the Korean War in 1953. After his return, he served as battery commander of 2nd Battalion, 130th Field Artillery before being mobilized in 1968 for the Vietnam War. After attending a Vietnamese language school, he served as a US Military Advisor; assigned to train, advise, and mentor a South Vietnamese artillery battalion during 1969.

In 1974, he was promoted to battalion commander of the 2nd Battalion, 130th Field Artillery and then commander of the 130th Field Artillery Brigade. Later appointments included Deputy Commander, State Area Command, and being promoted to General in 1984. He retired in 1986, and was inducted into the Kansas National Guard Hall of Fame in 2003.

Friends may call at Chapel Oaks Funeral Home in Highland after 10 a.m. Thursday. The Masonic Rights Ceremony will be held at 6 p.m., followed by the family visiting with friends.

A celebration of life service will be Friday, February 19, at 2 pm at the Highland Christian Church, with Reverend Brian Sommers officiating, assisted by Pastor Tom Carter. Burial and military honor services will follow at the Highland Cemetery.

Memorial contributions are suggested to Highland Christian Church, National Guard Museum, American Breast Cancer Society, or Masonic Lodge Scholarship fund. Memorials may be sent in care of the funeral home, PO Box 33, Highland, KS 66035.

A special message may be sent to the family at www.chapeloaksfuneralhome.com.