



Robert Walker McConnell

February 19, 1927 - January 16, 2025

Robert W. McConnell, age 97, formerly of Newman, CA, passed away in Bakersfield, CA on January 16th.

Bob will be interred at the Bakersfield National Cemetery in Arvin, CA on February 11, 2025, at 2:00 PM.

A Celebration of Life will be held at the West Side Theater, 1331 Main Street in Newman, CA on Sunday

February 23, 2025, from 1:00-3:30 PM.

Born in Modesto, CA on February 19, 1927, Bob attended Newman Elementary Schools, Orestimba High

School and Modesto Junior College. He was drafted into the army in June of 1945 and saw duty at Camp

Roberts, CA and Fort Riley, Kansas as a Technician Fourth Grade. After his service, he attended College of

the Pacific (UOP) in Stockton, CA. He married his junior high sweetheart, Shirley Awe, upon their graduation from UOP in 1950.

In the summer of 1951, Bob and Shirley moved to Wasco, CA where they were elementary school educators

for nearly 35 years. Bob served as a speech pathologist and next as the principal of Palm Ave School, where

he wore multiple hats, including directing annual plays with his 5th and 6th graders. He also served his

community as an active member of the Wasco United Methodist Church, as a founding member of the Wasco Festival of Roses, Kiwanis Club president, Job's Daughters leader, Wasco Historical Association, Toastmasters, Wasco Scholarship Foundation - and the list goes on! He also loved playing tennis at the high school and helping out filming Friday night football games.

In 1989 Bob and Shirley returned to their hometown of Newman, moving into the Awe family home, purchased by Shirley's parents in 1944. In retirement, Bob continued to live by his personal mantra ~ Service Was His Mission. In Newman, he loved serving his community including the Rotary Club, Salvation Army, Orestimba Presbyterian Church, supporting school bond elections, video graphing events, acting in community dramas and as a public speaking coach for Yolo Middle School and Orestimba High School students. In 1993, he founded and was the charter president of TOSCA—The Orestimba Scholarship Community Association. Bob and Shirley celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary with a community parade and drive-thru celebration in front of their 1914 home on August 6th, 2020.

Outside of his local community, he directed several elder hostels where seniors lived at Missions experiencing the California Mission System. For ten years he was a summer guide for the Yosemite Conservancy in Tuolumne Meadows and the Yosemite Valley. With his love for jazz music, he spent 30 years as an MC at the Sacramento Jazz Festival and the Santa Cruz Jazz Ensemble competition. And for over 50 years he was a fourth grade mission guide at Mission San Miguel and many others!

For the last six months, Bob was lovingly cared for at Joyful Living Care Home in Bakersfield and served by Hoffman Hospice. His caretakers, Jimmy and Neil, cared for him with love and respect, meeting all of his needs. Before coming back to Kern County, Valerie was his supportive assistant in Newman.

Survivors include his Awesome wife, Shirley, daughter Joan Louise McConnell Smith (Delano), son James Robert McConnell and his wife, Diane (San Simeon), seven grandchildren, twelve great grandchildren, with one more on the way!

Bob was preceded in death by his father Seth Walker McConnell, mother Arleen Cusick McConnell, mother-in-law Grizel Goulding Awe, and brothers John and Glenn McConnell.

Cemetery Details

Bakersfield National Cemetery

30338 E Bear Mountain Blvd
Arvin, CA 93203

Previous Events

Military Honors

FEB 11. 1:15 PM - 3:00 PM (PT)

Bakersfield National Cemetery
30338 E Bear Mountain Blvd
Arvin, CA 93203
(661) 867-2250

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in Bob's name to TOSCA, PO Box 18, Newman, CA <https://www.toscascholarships.org/giving>

Tribute Wall



“ I am so sorry Judy, and I could not make it today. Bob was one of the nicest people I have known, He was the photographer at my District Conference in 2014 South Shore, Lake Tahoe. I know he spent hours recording a video of the entire 3days. It is such a wonderful gift that I will appreciate forever, and the many related stories throughout the years I have known him. His smile when greeting you brightened one day, his powerful voice was amazing, he was so articulate. I could go on, but most importantly he made me feel like I was a special friend. Our thoughts and prayers go out to all his family and friends.
PDG, Marvin and Judy Williamson

Marvin Williamson - February 23, 2025 at 03:02 PM