



Bradley "Brad" W. Bigelow

November 1, 1936 - May 29, 2024

Bradley "Brad" W. Bigelow, age 87, of Kearney, passed away on Wednesday, May 29, 2024 at Brookstone Gardens in Kearney. Visitation will be at Horner Lieske McBride & Kuhl in Kearney on Friday, May 31st, 2024 from 5:00 pm -7:00 pm. A Celebration of Life will be held on Saturday, June 1, 2024 at 11:00 am at First Lutheran Church in Kearney, preceded by burial at the Kearney Cemetery at 9:30 am. Rev. Dr's. Michelle and Rick Carlson will officiate. Memorials can be made to First Lutheran Church in Kearney, Habitat for Humanity and University of Nebraska – Kearney Athletics. Please visit www.hlmkfuneral.com to leave a tribute or message of condolence. Horner Lieske McBride & Kuhl Funeral and Cremation Services of Kearney is in charge of arrangements.

Dr. Brad W. Bigelow, 87, of Kearney passed away on Wednesday, May 29th in Kearney where he had lived and served since 1968.

Brad was born on November 1, 1936 in Omaha, NE to Forrest and Anna Rohde Bigelow and grew up as an only child on 80 acres in Burt County in NE Nebraska. Farming didn't hold an interest for Brad, but he was in 4-H a number of years and raised Duroc sows. Brad's Family Farm was awarded a Knights of Aksarben Pioneer Farm Award, representing 100 (now 125) years of Bigelow Family ownership. Brad describes his farmhouse as "4 rooms and a path – our house had no running water but our hogs did".

Brad skipped two grades in his country school and graduated at 16 from Lyons High School in 1953. Of the decision for him to move up two grades, he said “that was a dubious decision at best, even though I now believe that it had a significant impact on all the great life experiences that have followed.” An excellent athlete, he played Midget, Legion and Town baseball as a pitcher. Despite the back problems that he attributed to hauling and stacking hay in his youth, he remained an athlete and sportsman until his early 80s. Brad also played the piano beautifully and as a Saxophonist, was in a band “The Kings Men” that played in small venues and on college campuses around Wayne State College.

At Wayne, Brad served as Editor of both the student newspaper Goldenrod and the yearbook Spizz. Journalism, tennis and theater were a big part of his years there. It is at Wayne that he met his future wife, Karen Johnson. They were married in Akron, Iowa on August 17th, 1958.

Brad earned his BA in education from Wayne State in 1957. He earned his master’s in education/clinical psychology in 1958 and doctorate in educational psychology 1964, both from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. In 2011, Brad was presented the Wayne State Alumni Achievement Award and was a trustee for the Wayne State Foundation. He also established the Brad Bigelow endowed Criminal Justice Scholarship at Wayne State. He enjoyed hearing from and meeting his student recipients each year and hearing their stories.

He became the first psychologist for the Nebraska Penal and Correctional complex in 1960 and served as the chief psychologist until 1968. He co-hosted a one-hour monthly TV series, The Prisoner Speaks, on Channels 10-11, and originated Project Youth, a panel of inmates that spoke to various schools, civic and religious groups around the state.

Brad later served as psychologist/program director at Kearney Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center from 1968 until retirement 1998. He created the State of Nebraska Evaluation Program for pre-adjudicated adolescent male offenders. Brad maintained his private practice until age 85 when he finally retired. He served as psychological consultant to Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Veterans Affairs, Mosaic Developmental Disabilities, school districts, the courts, and the Department of Health and Human Services. He served as a supervisor for mental health practitioners in Hastings and North Platte until 2017.

He was the co-founder of the Kearney Friends Program (Big Brothers/Big Sisters); co-founder and board member of Campus House Group Home for Girls; co-founder and former president of Nebraska Juvenile Justice Association (recipient of the association's Service to Youth Award in 1986 and 1998); and cofounder, former president of South Central Behavioral Service. He was present at Buffalo County Mental Health Board meetings until 2023 where he served for years as a board member. He also served on the Governor's Behavioral Health Oversight Committee.

Brad's practice covered the entire state of Nebraska. He was only one of a few psychologists who saw referrals in their own homes. To his knowledge, Brad was the longest practicing clinician in the state, having performed in excess of 30,000 evaluations during his career. As he said "I never turned anyone down." A lot of people didn't want to see him but they were required to in order to get Social Security benefits. He would tell them, "I am going to be your new best friend for the next few hours."

Work did not consume Brad's days. He devoted time to his wife and daughters, friends, and cherished time with his grandkids. He was an avid hunter, fisherman, golfer, reader and storyteller. A few days before his

passing, and article about a book Brad wrote in the last months of his life “Didja Hear the One About” appeared in the Kearney Hub. It was full of his famous “play on word” jokes and stories from his career and its characters, and as he said “I couldn’t make this stuff up!” He loved his family “my reason”, and was a faithful friend.

The family that loved him included his wife of 65 years, Karen; daughters Lisa Kurtz and husband Jeff, of Overland Park, KS; LeAnn Welsh of Omaha, NE; grandchildren John Kurtz and wife Jennie Hayes Kurtz of Nashville, TN; Molly Holmes and husband Ryan, Denver, CO; Sarah Welsh, London, UK; Claire Welsh, Denver, CO; Jack Welsh, Omaha, NE; and great-granddaughters Nellie and Josie Holmes.

Cemetery Details

Kearney Cemetery

4400 Avenue I
Kearney, NE 68847

Previous Events

Visitation

MAY 31. 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM (CT)

Horner Lieske McBride & Kuhl
2421 Avenue A
Kearney, NE 68847
(308) 237-2259
<https://www.hlmkfuneral.com>

Graveside Service

JUN 1. 9:30 AM (CT)

Kearney Cemetery
4400 Avenue I
Kearney, NE 68847

Funeral Service

JUN 1. 11:00 AM (CT)

First Lutheran Church
3315 Avenue G
Kearney, NE

Tribute Wall

MH

“ *What a Beautiful, Beautiful service! Brad was a wonderful man, husband & father who will be greatly missed! We will meet him again, when we meet Jesus, Alleluia! Sending hugs & prayers to the family!* 🙏❤️

Marie Hoppenstedt - June 03, 2024 at 07:19 PM

AS

“ *Amy Shadley lit a candle in memory of Bradley "Brad" Bigelow*



Amy Shadley - May 31, 2024 at 04:31 PM

AS

“ *I was a girl in the Campus House Program and I am forever Thankful for all that program did for me. The Directors of Campus House Rod and Delaine Uhlman have been life long mentors for me and I would have never succeeded in life without them and Campus House. I will always remember the contribution that Brad made in my life. RIP now Brad for a job well done. Thank you Amy J Cross Shadley*

Amy Shadley - May 31, 2024 at 04:28 PM

KH

“ *Katy and Christopher Holmes purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Bradley "Brad" W. Bigelow.*



Katy and Christopher Holmes - May 31, 2024 at 10:24 AM

KH

“ *Katy and Christopher Holmes planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Bradley "Brad" W. Bigelow.*

Katy and Christopher Holmes - May 31, 2024 at 10:24 AM



“ *Serene Retreat was purchased for the family of Bradley "Brad" W. Bigelow.*



May 31, 2024 at 09:54 AM

-C

“ *- Kearney Country Club purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Bradley "Brad" W. Bigelow.*



- Kearney Country Club - May 31, 2024 at 09:52 AM

-C

“ - Kearney Country Club planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Bradley "Brad" W. Bigelow.

- Kearney Country Club - May 31, 2024 at 09:52 AM

DB

“ Sorry about Brad. We shared many stories over the past. It was difficult for him to decline. I learned a lot from Brad by sitting by him on the Buffalo Mental Health Board. He will be missed by family and friends.

Dick Beechner - May 31, 2024 at 09:06 AM

PS

As an employee at YRTC years ago I had the privilege of working for Doc as we called him. He could lighten our day with his wit and sense of humor, especially his interpretation of "Foster Brooks". Rest in peace my friend.
Pat Snyder

Pat Snyder - June 01, 2024 at 10:45 PM

CT

“ Karen and family,
I am so heartbroken right now for all of you
and for me. When I saw on Horners website
that Brad passed away I just said no, no, no.
He was such a kind, caring, thoughtful man.
We had such nice visits everytime he came over and I heard plenty
of his stories. 🕒 He was definitely a storyteller. His obituary was
beautiful. I didn't realize he was involved in so many things.
I was going to call, but thought I'd wait Karen. Didn't know if we
could get through a conversation right now. I probably won't make it
to the service, but my heart and thoughts will be with you all.
My deepest sympathy,
Coleen Towery



Coleen S Towery - May 30, 2024 at 09:32 PM

TF

“ The Tye Family purchased the Beautiful Dreams
for the family of Bradley "Brad" W. Bigelow.



The Tye Family - May 30, 2024 at 06:47 PM

TF

“ The Tye Family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Bradley "Brad" W.
Bigelow.

The Tye Family - May 30, 2024 at 06:47 PM

BF

“ Becky, Mike and Family purchased the Serene Retreat for the family of Bradley "Brad" W. Bigelow.



Becky, Mike and Family - May 30, 2024 at 04:59 PM

JE

“ Joan E. purchased the Crystal Cross Bouquet for the family of Bradley "Brad" W. Bigelow.



Joan E. - May 30, 2024 at 10:54 AM

JE

“ Joan E. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Bradley "Brad" W. Bigelow.

Joan E. - May 30, 2024 at 10:54 AM



“ Enchanted Cottage was purchased for the family of Bradley "Brad" W. Bigelow.



May 30, 2024 at 10:09 AM

JK

“ *Jill&Joel, Eric, Beth, Lynn, and Karen planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Bradley "Brad" W. Bigelow.*

Jill&Joel, Eric, Beth, Lynn, and Karen - May 30, 2024 at 10:09 AM

KG

“ *Karen L Gutherless purchased the Enchanted Cottage for the family of Bradley "Brad" W. Bigelow.*



Karen L Gutherless - May 29, 2024 at 05:44 PM

KG

“ *Karen L Gutherless planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Bradley "Brad" W. Bigelow.*

Karen L Gutherless - May 29, 2024 at 05:44 PM