



Gary Wayne Watts

December 22, 1935 - January 27, 2021

Gary Wayne Watts of Apopka, Florida passed away during a brief hospital stay at the age of 85. He was a longtime resident of the Apopka/Forest City area. He was born Gary Wayne Estes in Fort Worth, Texas on December 22, 1935 to J. Marvin and Annie Margaret (Beach) Estes. After his mother re-married he took the last name of his step-father, Chester Leonard Watts. C.L. Watts was an Air Force officer and Gary followed him into the United States Air Force when he turned 18.

Gary served for eight years as a medical laboratory technician, stationed at Perrin Air Force Base in Texas and Royal Air Force Bases Mildenhall and Lakenheath in the United Kingdom. He also lived on base as a teenager when his step-father was posted to Kadena AFB in Okinawa, Japan and at Randolph AFB in San Antonio, TX. He was a graduate of Alamo Heights High School in San Antonio. He also spent part of his youth living in Shreveport, Louisiana. He attended Austin College in Sherman, Texas, The University of Maryland and Cambridge University in England, majoring in Business and Medical Technology.

Gary remained in the medical field for a number of years after he was honorably discharged from the service, serving as Chief Laboratory Technologist at a hospital in Tahoka, TX, then moving over to the business side of the medical field, serving as Director of Public Relations of a hospital in Grand Prairie, Texas and Administrator of a hospital in Arlington, Texas.

A people person by nature, Gary became interested in sales and found a position that suited him in nearby Dallas, Texas where he was hired as the Director of Marketing and Sales of the Dallas Convention and Tourism Bureau. In 1977 Dallas was named the number-one city in the nation for the most convention bookings which was credited to the efforts of he and his staff. Gary was also a partner in a club and restaurant, The King's Club, located in the Adolphus Hotel in Downtown Dallas. The hotel is on the National Register of Historic Places.

Seeking a new challenge, he moved to Albuquerque, NM in 1978 to assume the position of Director of Sales and Marketing of the Albuquerque Convention and Visitors Bureau where he increased convention bookings for the city and revamped Albuquerque's promotional campaigns. Moving back to the healthcare field, he came east to Orlando in 1982 to become the Director of Public Relations at Florida Hospital (now Advent Health). He oversaw the promotion of the hospital's 75th Anniversary in 1983, including a celebration in which the local community was invited, where he booked special guest, country music star Kenny Price of the television show "Hee Haw" to entertain.

In 1984, Gary was offered a unique opportunity that he felt that he could not pass up. Orlando was starting its new Convention and Visitors Bureau and Gary was hired as Sales Manager for Membership and Advertising. He was one of the first three people hired to help start this new organization now known as Visit Orlando. He remained with them for eight years, signing up many local businesses to become members of the Bureau to help them gain new customers from visitors to the Orlando area.

Gary also sold religious, health and lifestyle books for Home Health Education Service, a ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Although he only spent two years in this work, he greatly enjoyed the ability to minister to people and share his Christian faith with them. Gary was a long-time and devoted member of the church, joining as a teenager in 1949. His grandmother, Annie Lou Beach introduced him and his two sisters to the church. He held various church offices including: Head Elder, Head Deacon and Sabbath School Teacher in churches in several SDA conferences. He was also a board member of the Florida Hospital College of Health Sciences Foundation (Now Advent Health University Foundation).

His faith was very important to him and he enjoyed church activities and watching Adventist Christian programming on television. He had a decades long interest in health and natural foods and natural healing. He enjoyed cooking and generally did not rely on recipes for the meals that he prepared, cooking instead from memory. He loved to read and collect books and left behind an extensive library covering a wide variety of subjects. Gary was a devoted husband, father and grandfather known for his sense of humor and generosity, he was always willing to lend a hand to help others.

He is survived by his loving wife of 51 years Faye (Little) Watts. Sons Brian Watts, Damon Watts (Christy), Grandson Evan Watts, Granddaughters Ava, Ella and Anna Watts, all of Apopka, FL and a sister, Dolores Harris (Sam) of Houston, TX as well as cousins, nieces and nephews from across the United States. He was preceded in death by his parents Leonard and Margaret Watts and sister, Janice Watts all of Shreveport, LA.

He is deeply missed by all who loved him.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made to the Second Harvest Food Bank of Central Florida. <https://www.feedhopenow.org/site/SPageServer/>

Interment will be held on Friday, June 4, 2021 at 2:30pm at Cape Canaveral National Cemetery, Mims, Florida

The family of Gary Wayne Watts invites you to leave a message of condolence on the Tribute Wall created in his memory.

Events

MAY **Celebration of Life** 03:00PM - 04:00PM
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DeGusipe Funeral Home & Crematory - Maitland Chapel
9001 N. Orlando Avenue, Maitland, FL, US, 32751

JUN **Interment** 02:30PM
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Cape Canaveral National Cemetery
5525 US-1 North, Mims, FL, US, 32754