



Leonard "Gene" Handley

October 10, 1938 - July 12, 2021

Leonard Eugene Handley

East Wenatchee, WA

Gene Handley, 82 years old passed away peacefully on July 12, 2021. Gene was born and raised in Lockney, Texas on October 10, 1938. During his childhood years Gene was a frequent visitor on his horse to a neighboring group of sisters that piqued his interest. It was the oldest of this clan that caught his eye and after graduating from Lockney High School and beginning college at Texas Tech and her at McMurry College that Katie (Rucker) and Gene were married on June 14, 1958.

Gene excelled in athletics leading his High School football, basketball, and track teams. After High School he was passionate about golf which didn't sit well with his father-in-law when work was to be done in the fields. In 1968 after 10 years of farming cotton, wheat, and other row crops-- Katie, three boys, and a new baby girl moved to East Wenatchee where he embarked on a new adventure of growing apples. That first winter (1969) was devastating and the producing orchard he purchased died in the hardest winter the valley had seen on record. Starting from scratch he pulled and replanted their orchard and took on extra work as a journeyman welder working on most of the steel pipelines that were being built to supply the valley orchardist with water. Welding expanded into a business that produced the valleys first 4 bin hydraulic "swamping" trailers. His design revolutionized the apple industry. Today his vision of hydraulic trailers are in every large commercial orchard. He

also built 5th wheel trailers which many growers bought to haul their crops to sheds to pack. Those trailers built in the 70's and 80's still can be seen moving crops to markets. Even though Gene slowed down in his later years he never really retired. He was involved in his orchards to the very end giving advice and direction whether it was asked for or not.

Gene was an active member of Wenatchee Valley Baptist Church and Eastmont Baptist Church where he served many years as a deacon of both congregations. He was faithful and generous to the church and lead many people to the Lord. He was a Sunday School teacher and mentor and even though he was tough and had strong convictions he was soft hearted and loved his children and many friends that surrounded him. Gene was also a coach to many of his children's teams, served on many county boards, and was most proud of the work he did as a director of Growers Credit which played a key role in building and financing orchards all over Central Washington.

He is survived by his wife, Katie; three sons Rod (wife Janna of Lee's Summit, MO), Gary (wife Jan of Tampa, FL), Andy (wife Shane of East Wenatchee), and daughter Kathy (husband Jim of East Wenatchee), as well as 10 grandchildren and 5 great grandchildren.

A celebration of life will be held on July 31, 2021 at 10:00 a.m., at Eastmont Baptist Church. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made in his name to Eastmont Baptist Church, Rock Island Baptist Church, or Character That Counts (512 NE Victoria Drive; Lee's Summit, MO 64086) Arrangements made by Chapel of the Valley, East Wenatchee.