

R. Keith Whitley

Educator

R. Keith Whitley, 81, of Visalia died Tuesday, July 6, 2004. He was an educator.

Keith Whitley grew up in Rupert, Idaho, the youngest of three boys to a small grocery store owner and housewife. He dropped out of college to enlist in



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the Army after Pearl Harbor but eventually graduated in 1947, from the University of Idaho with a B.S. in Education. He subsequently attained the rank of Captain in the

Air Force Reserve.

His career included stints in management training with Montgomery Wards, selling life insurance with State Farm and extolling the virtues of Singer Sewing Machines.

He came into his own as an English teacher, however, where he delighted in correcting the grammatical errors of students and school administrators alike. His easy banter with the students, constant essay assignments for homework and hero worship of General Douglas MacArthur and the Chrysler Motor Corp., made him a widely recognized member of the faculty. His right wing political bent and proclivity to write scathing letters to the editor espousing the merits of Republicanism made him a community personality as well. When his three children, Julie (now in Chino Hills), Scott (Visalia), and Barry (Santa Rosa), graduated from high school, he left teaching to experiment with entrepreneurship as a candy store owner and caterer. When he retired, his wanderlust sent him to the east coast where he spent 20 years at the Elks National Retirement home in Bedford, Va. While there he traveled widely with the Ageless Wonders, where his love of dancing catapulted him to starring roles in their performances. He eventually came back to Visalia to be closer to his children and six grandchildren. His upbeat enthusiasm and love of nature, God, dogs, Bridge (cards) and shuffleboard will be sorely missed.

Visitation will be 6-8 p.m. Friday at Miller Memorial Chapel, Visalia. Service will be 9 a.m. Saturday at the chapel. Burial will be at Visalia District Cemetery.