

shared gravestone and the traditional Swedish hymn “How Great Thou Art” will be included in his memorial service.

Harold transferred his love of farming to his lawn and garden, and enjoyed sharing his “crop.” During the time between Thanksgiving and Christmas, Harold spent days in the kitchen making his famous popcorn cakes to be gifted to friends and family.

One of his biggest regrets was he always felt he was too scrawny to play sports. However, he had a deep passion for the teams he loved: the Royals, Wildcats, Chiefs, the local high school teams, the Big 8 and Big XII conference teams...and his beloved KWU Coyotes. Doug once asked Harold why the family always had to listen to the lowly Kansas City A’s. “Because I’m a part owner,” he replied. For years Doug believed him! Travels to Kansas City for the annual Big 8 and Big XII basketball tournaments became an annual ritual during retirement. One of Harold’s fondest sports memories was attending Game 7 of the 2014 World Series with Doug at the age of 91.

He and Evelyn took great joy traveling to watch their grandchildren’s athletic events, concerts and performances. It wasn’t unusual for them to travel halfway across to the state to witness a grandchild swim in one race!

Harold is survived by his three children Sonia Nelson (Jeff Mackey) of Edmonds, WA, Douglas Nelson (Janice) of Bonner Springs KS, and Anita Wiley (Jack) of Manhattan, KS; five grandchildren Amber Atchison (Chance), Kyle Bergquist (Allie), Neil Bergquist (Anna), Tyler Klug and Jillian Nelson; five step-grandchildren, Greg Klug (Sheri), Denet Brightbill (Scott), Kevin Mackey (Lisa), Christy Green (Shane) and Brian Mackey; five great-grandchildren, Karson Stroda, Easton Atchison, Jack Bergquist, Theo Bergquist and Harrison Atchison; 11 step-grandchildren, Erin Mackey, Kirsten Mackey, Lindsey Mackey Nickolas Mackey, Alyssa Green, Cameron Green, Kaitlyn Green, Joshua Mackey, Sebastian Jordan Klug, Natasha Klug and Gage Smith; two step-great-granddaughters, Jaiden Klug and Charlie Klug; sister-in-law, Marge Nelson; and numerous nieces and nephews. Evelyn and Harold also have two former international student-daughters that lived with them, Gill Collingwood from Wales and Susi Konigseder from Austria.

Harold was preceded in death by his wife, Evelyn Nelson; parents, Otto and Olive Nelson and all eight of his siblings: Leslie Nelson, Katherine Fike, Clarice Fredrickson, Clarence “Bud” Nelson, Vincent Nelson, Leroy “Al” Nelson, Irene Renken and Bertil Nelson.

### Funeral Service

First United Methodist Church  
McPherson, Kansas

Wednesday, April 10, 2024, at 1:00 PM

### Officiating Clergy

Rev. Gayla Rapp Rev. Donna Voteau Rev. Barry Dundas

### Special Music

**Processional:** “How Great Thou Art” arrangement by John Behnke commissioned by Nita Nelson Wiley in honor of her parents, Rev. Harold E. Nelson and Evelyn Eisenhauer Nelson, for sharing their love of music and ministry with their family. First performed on Easter, March 31, 2024, at FUM Manhattan, KS.

**Recording:** “Children of the Heavenly Father”, tape of Harold’s father, Otto Nelson, singing this Swedish hymn in Swedish (Trygarre kan ingen vara) in 1961. (*Congregation sings in English after*)

**Solo:** “It Is Well With My Soul” ~ Ryan Hicks, vocalist

**Congregational Hymn:** “How Great Thou Art”

**Solo:** “Beautiful Savior” ~ Michelle Dolan, vocalist

**Recessional:** “Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee”

*Jean Hendricks, pianist & organist*

### Eulogy

Douglas Nelson, son and Jim Nelson, nephew

### Poem

written by Harold E. Nelson S/Sgt Thy Will "Oh Lord"  
read by Amber Atchison, granddaughter

### Casketbearers

Amber Atchison Kyle Bergquist Neil Bergquist  
Tyler Klug Jillian Nelson Greg Klug Denet Smith

### Ushers

Maynard Lewis David Ward

### Final Resting Place

McPherson Cemetery

*Military Honors conducted by*

*American Legion Post #24 & V.F.W. Post #2715*

*"Taps" by Mark Casebeer, trumpet*

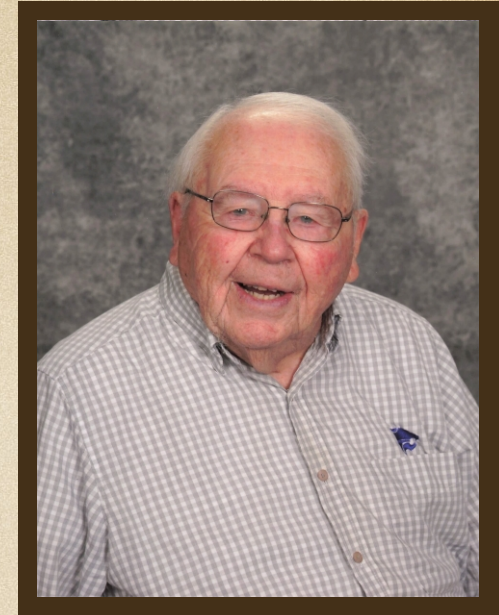
### Memorial Donations

In lieu of flowers, the family suggests memorial donations to the Harold & Evelyn (Eisenhauer) Nelson Endowed Scholarship Fund at Kansas Wesleyan University or the McPherson Opera House Endowment Fund.

### Appreciation & Reception

Harold's family wishes to express their sincere appreciation for your prayers and kindness, evidenced in thought and deed, and your presence at this service. Following the graveside service, all are welcome back to the church for refreshments and fellowship.

*Stockham Family Funeral Home*



## *A Celebration of Life* Rev. Harold Eskil Nelson September 14, 1923 - April 4, 2024



*God saw him getting tired, a cure not meant to be. So, He put his arms around him, and whispered...."Come with Me."*

## *Reverend Harold Eskil Nelson*

The Greatest Generation has lost another warrior. Early in the morning of April 4, 2024, while sleeping peacefully, the Reverend Harold Eskil Nelson, age 100, of Manhattan, KS (formerly of McPherson, KS) was beckoned to reunite with the love of his life, Evelyn, the only woman he ever kissed.

Born on his mother's birthday, September 14, 1923, near Scandia, KS, Harold was the 7th of nine brothers and sisters to bless Otto and Olive Nelson. He often quipped that delivering a baby was likely not the way his mother hoped to spend her birthday. Growing up during the Depression, the family frequently moved from farmstead to farmstead as sharecroppers throughout Republic County. It was the Swedish Methodist Church of Scandia that provided stability, spiritual guidance and a community of care for the Nelson clan. Harold's grandfather, Oliver Nelson, was a founding member of the church and his father, Otto, frequently sang the traditional Swedish song "Tryggare kan ingen vara" (Children of The Heavenly Father) at funerals until he was well into his 80s. For more than a century, there was always a Nelson in the church choir. This solid foundation molded the faith and theological perspective that would guide Harold throughout his lifetime.

Harold graduated from Scandia High School in 1941. Following graduation, he worked as a farmer for a year before enrolling at Kansas Wesleyan University in the fall of 1942. Proudly, Harold was one of more than 80 members of the Nelson family to have attended KWU at some point during their academic journey.

Harold's collegiate pursuit of a history major was interrupted in Spring 1943 when drafted to serve in WW II. While at basic training with the Army at Fort Campbell, KY, he saw a flyer asking for volunteers for the newly formed Army Air Corps and decided to volunteer. Harold survived 22 missions as a B-17 tail gunner of the 341st Bomb Squadron, 97th Bomb Group. Flying from a base in Foggia, Italy his squadron was always escorted by the Red Tails, the heroic Tuskegee Airmen. Harold once shared, "I always knew that we would arrive back safely when we were escorted by the Red Tails." On VE day, he returned to his barrack, sat on the edge of his bed, put his head in his hands and cried.

In 2022 while traveling through the South with daughter Nita and son-in-law Jack, Harold visited the Tuskegee Airmen

National Historic Site and Museum. The staff was honored and thrilled by his visit. They posted Harold's visit on their Facebook page and many wanted pictures with him.

Harold returned to Kansas Wesleyan after the war. At convocation in Sams Chapel for incoming freshmen, a young woman in the audience nudged her friend next to her, pointed to a young man on the stage and said, "That's the man I'm going to marry." True to her word, Evelyn Eisenhauer married Harold at University Methodist Church, Salina, KS on July 25, 1948.

His love for the KWU Coyotes never faltered. In 1983, Harold was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Divinity by Kansas Wesleyan. In 2015, Evelyn and Harold were joint recipients of the Alumni Service Award. The Harold and Evelyn (Eisenhauer) Nelson Endowed Scholarship Fund has been supporting Kansas Wesleyan students in the fields of Religion and Education for decades.

After college graduation, Harold contemplated a choice between farming or following a call to the ministry. With the money from savings bonds purchased during the war, he purchased farmland in Jewell County. That land is still farmed by Harold's nephew, Ron Fredrickson, and Ron's son, Jeremy. However, as a young lad, he had been transfixed by stories from his uncle, Rev. B.O. Peterson, who had served as a missionary in the Philippines during the early 20th century. That uncle was also one of the first of the Nelson relatives to attend KWU. Ultimately, Harold followed the spirit in his heart to serve the Lord. The young couple spent one year in Kentucky at Asbury Seminary. After one year, he enrolled at Drew University in New Jersey, concurrently serving the historic Woodrow Methodist Church on Staten Island, NY. While there, Harold and Evelyn were blessed with the birth of their first child, daughter Sonia Sue born in Brooklyn Methodist Hospital (1952). Upon graduation from seminary, the bishop of New Jersey approached Harold and promised the best Garden State assignment available, but the desire to return to their Kansas roots was a stronger pull.

Thus, Harold was appointed pastor of the Methodist churches in Gypsum, KS and Roxbury, KS (1954-1961). Sonia became the big sister to brother Douglas Ray (1955) and Anita Marie (1958). Subsequent appointments took Harold and Evelyn to serve churches in Phillipsburg, KS

(1961-1968), Winfield, KS (1968-1972), District Superintendent in Hutchinson, KS (1972-1978) and finally First United Methodist Church, McPherson, KS (1978-1988). After serving as Associate Pastor for Trinity United Methodist Church of Hutchinson, KS (1988-1991), Harold returned to McPherson First United Methodist Church to do pastoral care until 2017. Harold continued to actively work for the church community until he was 94 visiting church members in the hospital or confined to their homes and calling membership on their birthdays and anniversaries. His talents for fiscal stewardship, youth ministry and congregational growth were appreciated by denomination leadership and key qualities that influenced his appointments.

Harold's community service extended beyond the sanctuary. He was an active member of Lions Club for more than 65 years. It wasn't unusual for him to receive a phone call during the middle of the night requesting he drive to another town to pick up a pair of donated eyes from a recently deceased, and deliver them so that another may see. Harold served in leadership positions for several civic service organizations, including the McPherson Chamber of Commerce. Evelyn and he were actively involved in fundraising for the restoration of the McPherson Opera House. He served on the Board of Trustees for Kansas Wesleyan University, Southwestern College and St. Paul's School of Theology. Harold served on the original Board of Trustees for the construction of Wesley Towers in Hutchinson. He served as a delegate to World Methodist Conferences in Kenya, China and Germany.

In the early 1960s, the family spent summers camping in a tent or a homemade trailer at family church camps. For two summers, he led Methodist canoe camps for high school boys in the boundary waters of northern Minnesota. In 1964, on the recommendation of his district superintendent, he purchased a cabin nestled in Wahatoya Canyon between the Spanish Peaks near La Veta, CO in what is now commonly referred to as "Little Kansas." Over the years that slice of "Preacher's Heaven" was shared with literally hundreds of teenagers in MYF groups, family, church members and friends who experienced spiritual rejuvenation, relaxation, honeymoons and escape from the Kansas heat. Sharing their slice of heaven with others provided Harold and Evelyn with some of their happiest memories. Pre-dawn mornings evenings spent fishing, sharing conversation with friends and making popcorn over the coals brought them great joy. It is fitting that Psalm 121 ("I lift my eyes to the hills") is engraved upon Harold and Evelyn's