

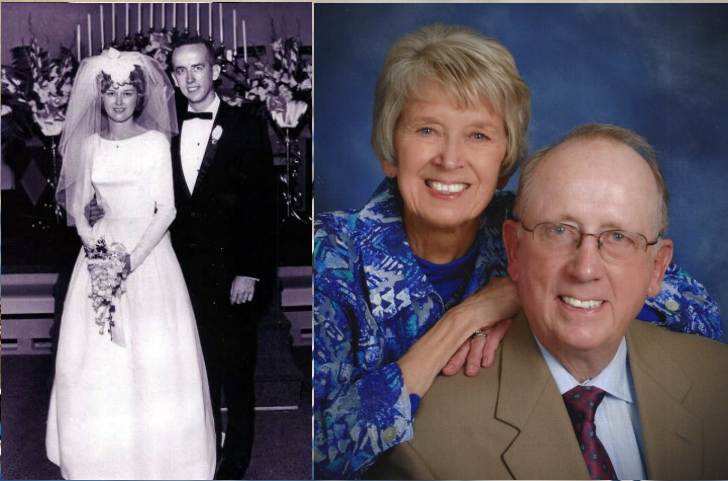
Duane's Yellowstone Light dream continued. He bought more cattle. He started to teach Jeff, his son-in-law, the ropes including him on the cattle adventure. There was this plan that things could run at a smaller scale when Duane was too old to take care of the cattle on his own. Things were falling into place and then, they weren't.

Duane died after a full day working cattle on Friday October 25, 2024 – boots on, eyes to heaven. He had often told us that he wanted to die face down in a pile of poop surrounded by his herd. He went out staying active and doing what he loved. He got his wish. Despite missing him desperately, we know he is with Jesus and our mom.

Thiel, we are so grateful! We will miss you every day until we see you again – tell Mom “hi” for us.

Survivors include: two daughters, Jo Dee Westbrook (Mike) of Loveland, CO and Christine Stewart (Jeff) of Gardner, KS; brother, Russell Thiel (Rae) of Andover, KS; brother-in-law, Robin Bowers (Debbie) of Marquette, KS; five grandchildren, Taylor and Brock Stewart and Lucas, Allison, and Molly Westbrook; and many extended family and friends.

He was preceded in death by his parents and brothers, Mart Thiel and Thurston Thiel as well as his loving wife of 55 years, Judy.



Funeral Service
First Baptist Church
McPherson, Kansas
Monday, November 11, 2024, at 11:00 AM

Officiating Clergy
Pastor John Pattison

Special Music
Solos: "Boundless Love"
"In This Very Room"
Katie Sears, vocalist / Mark Kreider, pianist

Casket Bearers
Mike Westbrook ~ Jeff Stewart ~ Lucas Westbrook
Brock Stewart ~ Russell Thiel ~ John Morris

Ushers
Cody Moors ~ Grant Myers ~ Bryson Lacey

Final Resting Place
Temple Church Cemetery
Gypsum, Kansas
Monday, November 11, 2024, at 2:00 PM
Officiant: Pastor Craig Rankin

Memorial Donations
Memorial donations can be made to First Baptist Church, McPherson or Temple Church, Gypsum in care of Stockham Family Funeral Home, 205 North Chestnut, McPherson, KS 67460.

Appreciation & Luncheon
Duane's family wishes to express their sincere appreciation for all your prayers and kindness, evidenced in thought and deed, and for your presence at this service.

Following the funeral service, the family invites all to stay for food and fellowship.

Stockham Family Funeral Home



In Loving Memory
Duane E. Thiel
October 1, 1939 - October 25, 2024



Duane E. Thiel began his adventures on October 1, 1939 as the third son born to a busy family of hardworking farmers in rural Gypsum, Kansas. Peewee, as he was called by his two older brothers, was the baby of the family for seven years until his brother Russell came along. The boys worked the land with their dad, Ernie, and managed to get into more than one pickle. Growing up on the farm is where he learned how to manage crops, raise cattle, and developed his passion for ranching. You could see it in his eyes when he talked about his cattle – or watched him calling them with a “come boss come” to let them know it was time to eat. There was always a right way, a wrong way, and a Duane Thiel way. Ask those who worked with him – you absolutely need to know the Duane Thiel way.

Gypsum is also where he first encountered the love of his life. At age 13, he saw Judy when their one room schools were competing in a softball game. Duane took one look into those blue eyes and he knew. He even told his teacher, “I’m going to marry that girl someday.” They dated through high school and college where Duane earned a degree in Mechanical Engineering from Kansas State University.

They broke up for a time when Judy, being an independent woman, wasn’t sure if she was ready to settle down. Though sad about the rejection, he moved to Tulsa and started his new aviation job in Tulsa, Oklahoma. He was extremely lonely, visiting the local feedlot to find company with other ranchers and the cattle. He drew inspiration from one of his “Thielisms” gleaned in his physics textbook. “Problems which seem fiendishly difficult at first often yield to a persistent and systematic approach.” The road from Tulsa to Salina was well traveled that year. Duane was persistent; Judy eventually caved. Eleven years after meeting, on June 12, 1964, he got his wish - the dynamic duo tied the knot.

Tulsa was the wild frontier when the newlyweds, now an engineer and first grade teacher, started their life together in Oklahoma. They lived in a two-bedroom fixer-upper with lawn chairs for furniture, just so they could be in the country. At night, they could look up through the rafters and see the scorpions running past.

Judy and Duane had many adventures while in Oklahoma, and things always seemed to happen when Duane was away on business. Exhibit A: Judy had a run-in with a big black snake that was climbing on a screen door. Duane came home to find a minefield of divots in the lawn at the site of the battle -- the snake lost. Exhibit B: Duane was on a trip to Brazil with

American Airlines when Judy had to take care of a calf that had passed. What do you do when a 200-pound animal needs to vacate the premises? Judy hooked up a chain to the beast and dragged it away with the tractor. Exhibit C: Thiel always schemed about new projects including honeybees, earthworms, root beer, race horses, and lately, a Tesla truck outfitted with a bale hauler.

Duane always wanted boys -- Jo Dee was the first to arrive, followed three years later by his second daughter Christine. They grew up learning to drive tractors, feed cows and hunt down the dreaded musk thistle. He paid them five cents a head. They would tell you they were grossly underpaid.

The family stayed in Ramona for several years until the calls for home became too strong to ignore. Judy was worried about the schools for the girls’ education and Duane wanted to come back to be closer to the family farm. He got an opportunity to work at a pharmaceutical plant in McPherson. They moved in 1976, building a home on Liberty Drive built by Judy’s brother Clint. Clint and Duane were very close. Clint was a straight shooter which he respected. Clint died way too soon – that was a tough one for us all.

None of us really called him Duane....he was Dad, Cuz, Uncle, Cowboy, or Thiel. There may be others, but maybe not in church. Duane was also known for his practical jokes.....from gag gifts, to tweeting Christmas ornaments left under neighbors’ windows, to ceramic Cheetahs. Laughter, relationships, and hard work drew people to Thiel.

Duane’s faith was always the cornerstone of his life. He and Judy quickly found a home at the McPherson First Baptist Church. They became active in the youth group and the choir, New Beginnings. Whether ski trips, retreats or choir tours, Thiel managed to make an impact. More than a few of the old gang reached out to say how influential Duane was in their lives. Some said he contributed to making them the men they are today.

Judy and Duane both continued in leadership at the church after the girls left home. Whether the Board of Education, Deacons, or Search Committees, Duane was still active in the church, leading a Sunday School class up until his very last days. The Shalom class blessed his and Judy’s life for almost 50 years. The church was a powerful influence

in his life, which he cherished. At First Baptist Church, or Temple Church, he always felt at home.

While having daughters wasn’t quite what he had in mind, those daughters got married. And then came the grandkids. Taylor was the first to arrive. This funny thing happened. Duane developed a previously unknown superpower. He became a PaPa. Not just any PaPa, but one that had super hero status. He dropped everything in a single bound when she came to visit. He changed diapers, fed bottles and as she grew, took her to meet the cattle. Soon Lucas arrived. The super power strengthened. This continued with the arrival of Brock, Allison, and certainly not least, Molly. He built them a stone structure on the farm called Fort Bodark, made of Kansas stone which looked very authentic. He buried things in the fort for the grandkids to find and may have had license to some historical fiction about the “artifacts” they found when playing there on warm summer days. He funded ski trips to impart on them his love of skiing. He attended games, track meets, concerts and graduations. He was present and very close with all of them. They loved him deeply and miss him already.

Duane continued to work at Sanofi (Bayer, Abbott) - so many names - until he retired at the ripe old age of 55. He was going to ranch in his “retirement” and that is exactly what he did. He became a bank board member at Roxbury bank, worked for the Lindsborg Water Board and took care of his cattle. Judy continued to teach; grandkids visited often; and he was his own boss. He was the happiest he had ever been – he was changed. Thiel cooked, cleaned, and enjoyed the loves of his life, until Judy’s health started to decline. He was there for her, taking care of her up until the end. He was devastated by her passing and missed her every single day.

The cows still beckoned, and he continued to ranch. Without his voice of reason, Judy, around, he started to scheme. He always said he only wanted to own the land that was next to his. He made some purchases – Judy would have said – “Thiel – you don’t need any more land!” He bought it anyway in the hopes of creating Yellowstone Light. For those of you that knew our Duane, even for five minutes, you would quickly learn that he loved the show Yellowstone -- really loved it. He wanted to be John Dutton. He was included on a trip to Montana with his brother Russ and his wife Rae to see Yellowstone in person. Russ and he were very close - Duane was lucky to have them both in his life.