

Waldo Walker

6H-R
9-3-2020

Waldo Walker, age 89, of Grinnell, died on Friday, August 28, 2020, at St. Francis Manor in Grinnell. Condolences may be offered to the family online at www.smithfh.com.

Waldo Sylvester Walker was born the son of Waldo Sylvester, Sr. and Mildred Kathleen (Littelle) Walker on June 12, 1931, in Fayette, Iowa. He was raised in Fayette and graduated from Fayette High School with the class of 1949. He received his B.S. in Biology Cum Laude from Upper Iowa University in 1953 and his M.S. in 1957 and Ph.D. in 1959, both from the University of Iowa in Biology.



Waldo honorably served in the United States Army 1953 to 1955 as a Troop Movement Control Specialist. Waldo was united in marriage to Marie J. Olsen in 1952 in Fayette, Iowa, and to this union two daughters were born, Martha Lynn and Gayle Ann. Waldo was united in marriage to Rita Kay White on June 16, 1984, in Grinnell, where they lived all of their married lives.

While working on his advanced degrees, Waldo was a Teaching Assistant in Botany at the University of Iowa. His career at Grinnell College began in 1958 when he was hired as an Assistant Professor of Biology. In 1963, Waldo became Associate Professor of Biology and Professor of Biology in 1968. Upon his retirement in 2001 he became Professor Emeritus of Biology. He spent one year as a Research Associate in the Department of Botany at the University of British Columbia. Waldo was a member of the American Association of Colleges, American Association of Higher Education and American Conference of Academic Deans where he served as Board Member, Chair and National President. He was also a member of the Sigma Xi Research Honor Society. He had six publications in recognized journals in the areas of plant anatomy, plant physiology, and plant cell ultrastructure. He received two NSF grants, one NIH grant and was an NSF Science Faculty Fellow. He has been listed in Who's Who in America since 1969. The Waldo S. Walker Endowed Chair in Biology was established by a former student in recognition of his extraordinary commitment to teaching and his students.

By 1973 he had assumed the administrative position of Dean and Executive Vice-President of the College and served the College until his retirement in various administrative positions including acting President, Provost, Treasurer, Vice President for College Services and Director of Facilities Management. During his time as Dean he was instrumental in the development of such curricular innovations as the first-year tutorial, faculty writing workshops, and the Writing and Reading Labs.

Waldo was active in community service, serving on Boards of Directors for the Poweshiek County Mental Health Center, Grinnell Regional Medical Center, St. Francis Manor, and Seeland Park just to name a few. Waldo held a strong love of nature, whether teaching biology, traveling out west to Rocky Mountain National Park, or bird watching. He was also a music enthusiast, who enjoyed a wide range of genres, from country to classical. Waldo's enjoyments included building hardwood furniture, visiting with friends and former students, playing racquet sports, bicycling and reading. He will be remembered for his love of nature, respect for education, musical gifts, heart for justice, and the strong love of his family.

Waldo is survived by his wife of 36 years, Rita Walker of Grinnell; his two daughters, Martha (Art) Sheffield of San Antonio, Texas, and Gayle (David) Walker of Westerville, Ohio; step-daughter, Sara (John) Thompson of Grinnell; four grandchildren, Angela Sheffield of Burke, Va., Crystal (Kwame) Webster of San Antonio, Texas, Hilary Walker of Berkeley, Calif., and Kelsey Walker of Ft. Collins, Colo.; two step-grandchildren, Jesse Thompson of Colfax, Iowa, and Shane Thompson of Grinnell, Iowa; and four great grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his parents and his sister, Lorraine Lovin.

Due to the Covid-19 virus, a private family burial will be held. A Celebration of Life will be scheduled at a later date.

Memorials may be designated to Krumm Preserve or the St. Francis Manor Foundation (proceeds to be used for tree replacement).

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Waldo Walker, 89, of Grinnell, died Friday, Aug. 28, 2020, at St. Francis Manor in Grinnell.

Funeral arrangements are pending at the Smith Funeral Home in Grinnell.

A memorial fund will be established. Condolences may be offered to the family online at www.smithfh.com.

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