



Robert Whitman McKeen

September 29, 1927 - February 20, 2026

Known for his strong work ethic, a gentle kindness, and especially for his persistence to defy the odds no matter what the challenge, Robert Whitman McKeen, born September 29, 1927, died peacefully at the age of 98 on February 20, 2026, in his Defiance hometown surrounded by family.

A 1946 graduate of Defiance High School, Bob met Rosemary Ralston while attending Defiance College. Married on June 16, 1949, in a grand southern Asheville, N.C. wedding, they were married almost 58 years before Rosie's death.

Bob, who always made sure he worked a job, 31 jobs to be exact, grew up blazing a trail down Clinton Street working at the Valentine and Strand Theater for 20 cents an hour, frying hamburgers at Miller's, washing bottles at Arps, and "barreling" chocolate at Nick's Candy Shop. He also proudly shared how he and his DHS football team contributed to the WWII war effort to prepare and tamp the tracks on the B and O Railroad for 66 cents an hour. Bob's 41 year career at General Motors began as a clerk and he advanced to tool engineer where he repeatedly was awarded MIP's for developing ideas to improve foundry efficiency. Before retiring, he started McKeen Realty and served as its broker for 15 years before he and Rosie enjoyed years of travel and living in Florida.

Bob served on the Park and Rec Board, the Defiance city Planning Board, and he was a member of Rotary and St. John's Catholic and its choir. He loved to golf and practiced for years to finally earn a spot as a playoff

contender in the Kettering C.C. Championship.

Talented and resourceful, he designed and built bookcases, tables, custom seating and planted hundreds of trees and "Penny Pine" seedlings which stand today on Power Dam, Kettering and Ashpacher Road. Ever the car buff, his zest for Corvairs and analyzing mechanics of anything with wheels inspired him to keep a chronology of cars he owned since he bought his first Model T for \$35 in 1945.

Bob is survived by daughter Kerry, and son-in-law Tom Mendenhall, grandchildren, Will and Molly (Evan) and great grandsons, Beck, Lane McKeen and Brooks whom he adored. Preceded in death by son Patrick, his parents, and brothers Dave and Tom, he loved being Uncle Bob to Shellie, Susie, Penny, Lisa, Kim, Tim and Mike. He cherished his special relationship with cousin Robert and wife, Leah Traut and nephew Kim McKeen.

Robert McKeen, also known for his generosity, worked hard and fought hard with humble determination and grit which belies the physical challenges he endured and inevitably conquered to live a long and full life. He will be missed. A Celebration of Life will be held from 2 p.m. until 5 p.m. on March 27 at Defiance College's Dana Hall Art Gallery on East Sessions Street.

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

MAR 27. 2:00 PM - 5:00 PM (ET)

Dana Hall Art Gallery
204 E Sessions Ave
Defiance, OH 43512

Tribute Wall



“ 1 file added to the album *Memories Album*



Rodenberger Funeral Home - March 02 at 09:40 AM