



George H. Emert

December 15, 1938 - March 21, 2018

George H. Emert spent the morning of Wednesday, March 21, 2018 in his Skagit County country home surrounded by family singing his beloved music, then left his body to return to his true HOME. The son of Victor K. Emert and Hazel Emert Ridley, he was born December 15, 1938, on a sharecropper farm at the end of a mule trail in Sevier County, Tennessee. The beginnings of his “schooling” in a one room schoolhouse led to a lifetime love of education that included graduation from Morristown High School in Morristown, Tennessee, in 1956; two years at Lincoln Memorial University from 1956-1958; a Bachelor’s Degree in Zoology, Chemistry, and Mathematics from the University of Colorado in 1962; a Master’s Degree in Zoology from Colorado State University in 1970; a Ph.D. in Biochemistry and Nutrition from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in 1973; and a post-doctoral fellowship at the University of Colorado in 1974.

At the request of uncles to honor an Emert family tradition of military service during times of war, he joined the U.S. Army in 1963. Green Beret U.S. Special Forces training led to two tours in Vietnam as a member of Alpha Detachment teams. In later years after completing his Ph.D., continued military reserve service involved a mobilization designation assignment as a biological warfare expert and was later followed by membership on the Navy ROTC

Association Advisory Board and Membership (Chair 2000-2002) on the Air University Board of Visitors. Military service awards included an air medal, Bronze Star, Army Commendation, Combat Infantry Badge, American Expeditionary Force Medal, and a Vietnam Service Medal. He was also awarded a Medal of Honor by the Daughters of the American Revolution in 1997.

In Okinawa between tours in Vietnam, he met Billie Marie Bush on a blind date that led to a wedding in Laramie, Wyoming, on June 10, 1967. For the next fifty-plus years they had the gift of sharing pathways and were blessed with four daughters and ten grandchildren who followed.

Professionally, George's doctoral research involving enzymatically converting biomass into an alternate source of petrochemicals led to a Director of Biochemical Technology position at Gulf Oil Corporation. After five years in industry, his long-range plan of returning to the academic world caused him to take a large donation of laboratory equipment and grant money to the University of Arkansas where he was a Professor of Biochemistry and Director of the Biomass Research Center. In 1984 he was offered the position of Executive Vice President at Auburn University and became an ardent War Eagle fan for the rest of his years.

Similarities in academic programs between Auburn University and Utah State University caused him to accept the position of President of Utah State University when offered in 1992. During his years in Logan, Utah, USU became part of his soul. When he stepped down from the presidency on January 1, 2001, as Professor of Biochemistry and President Emeritus, he found great joy in returning to the classroom to teach chemistry and advise students. He was designated the College of Science Advisor of the Year in 2003. Over the years additional interests include golf, tennis, Masons, American Legion, and VFW; awards include Paul Harris Fellow, Fellow of the

American Institute of Chemists, Colorado State University College of Natural Science Alumnus of the Year, Virginia Tech College of Agriculture Alumnus of the Year, Morristown High School Alumnus Hall of Fame, Member of Lincoln Memorial University Educators' Hall of Fame, and USU Old Main Emeriti Award.

The lure of helping grandchildren precipitated a move to a Bellingham address in Skagit County, Washington, where he found joy in grandsons, friends, his church, playing Tennessee mountain music, a cabin in Wyoming, and tending his land. He is survived by his wife Billie; daughters: Debra Lipp (Eric) of Birmingham, AL; Lanie Taylor (Todd) of Nashville, TN; Laurie Emert of Bellingham, WA; and Jamie Emert (Kyle) of Seattle, WA; and grandchildren: Jessica Zorn, Kelsey Taylor, Steven Lipp, Noah Taylor, Brianna Lipp, Ellie Lipp, Maxwell Gargano, Jacob Gargano, Nicholas Gargano and Sophie Taylor. Memorial contributions may be made in George's name to Whatcom Hospice House.

A memorial service will be held Saturday March 24, 2018 at 1:00 PM at Allen United Methodist Church (16775 Allen West Rd. Bow, WA 98232).

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