

## Neel Summers

November 26, 1930 - February 9, 2015

Neel Summers passed away at home on February 9, 2015, in Wooster, Ohio. He was eighty-four years old. Neel is survived by his wife, Elsie Summers, to whom he was happily married for almost fifty years as their golden wedding anniversary was set to take place later this year. He and Elsie have two sons: Greg, who lives presently in Wisconsin with his wife and two children; and Brian and his loving family who live in Ohio.

Neel was born in Wallback, Clay County, West Virginia, the son of William Summers and Lula James. He grew up in West Virginia during the 1930s and 1940s and was always intensely proud of his upbringing, despite the relative hardships of the era. Neel served honorably in the United States Army from 1952 until 1954 and spent the vast majority of his service stationed in West Germany. During the course of this service to his country, Neel was awarded the National Defense Service Medal, the Army of Occupation Medal, and the Good Conduct Medal. Moreover, in recognition of Neel's time in the military, he was very recently privileged to participate with many of his fellow veterans in an Honor Flight to visit the various war memorials in Washington, D.C. in June 2014.

Following his military service, Neel earned a Bachelor of Arts in Education from Glenville State College in 1957, a Master of Arts in English from Marshall University in 1960, and a Master of Education degree from Miami (Ohio)

University in 1969. After finishing his educational endeavors, Neel lived for most of his adult life in a home he built with his family in the picturesque rolling countryside of Holmes County before moving to Wayne County in his later years.

Neel devoted the whole of his professional career to the education of children with a special emphasis on teaching those children about the outdoors and the conservation of the natural environment that he so passionately loved. He began his career as a fifth grade teacher at Holmesville Elementary School in 1957. By 1972, he was named the principal of Holmesville Elementary, and he would continue in that cherished role until his retirement in 1997. Neel was a consummate educator. He cared deeply about each one of his students, and he especially loved helping them learn. He was beloved by the many professional colleagues with whom he worked over the years and respected by the local community he served.

Among Neel's proudest achievements was the lasting work he did in the field of outdoor education. His great passion in this area was birds, and he was a font of knowledge regarding their varieties, songs, and nesting habits. An "environmentalist" long before the term became commonplace, Neel served as the co-director of the Outdoor Education program for sixth graders in the Southeast Local School District. The week-long camp became a time-honored tradition within the school district, an annual experience held every spring at nearby Camp Wanake that touched the lives of generations of sixth grade students who participated through the years. In addition, Neel helped to build a land laboratory on the grounds of Holmesville Elementary that remains in use to this day and which was renamed as the "Neel Summers Land Lab" in his honor upon his retirement as the school principal. In his personal time, Neel was also a long-time volunteer for The Wilderness Center in Wilmot, Ohio and the Friends of Wooster Memorial Park in Wooster, Ohio, and he taught nature classes for many years through the Wayne County Enrichment

Academy.

Neel had three siblings: Rader (predeceased), Curwood (predeceased), and Lewis, who still lives in North Carolina.

The family would like to extend a heartfelt expression of gratitude to the nurses, aides, and volunteers of LifeCare Hospice in Wooster, Ohio for their wonderful care and support.

In lieu of flowers, the family has requested that anyone wishing to do so may make a memorial donation in Neel's memory to The Wilderness Center, 9877 Alabama Ave. SW. Wilmot, Ohio 44689 or to the Friends of Wooster Memorial Park, P.O. Box 1776, Wooster, Ohio 44691.

A celebration of life service celebrating Neel's life will be held on Saturday, 2:00 p.m. at the Holmesville Elementary School, (8141 E. Jackson St., Holmesville, Ohio 44633) with Pastor Christy Bowers officiating.

The family will greet friends a half-hour (1:30 p.m.- 2:00 p.m.) prior to services.

On-Line condolences to: [www.custerglenn.com](http://www.custerglenn.com) where interested individuals may also share a memory.

# Previous Events

## Visitation

FEB 28. 1:30 PM - 2:00 PM (ET)

Holmesville Elementary School  
8141 E. Jackson St.  
Holmesville, OH 44633

## Service

FEB 28. 2:00 PM (ET)

Holmesville Elementary School  
8141 E. Jackson St.  
Holmesville, OH 44633

# Tribute Wall

JO

“ My daughter was lucky enough to have Mr. Summers for Enrichment Academy in March of 2013 for his bird watching course and again for his brain teasers course. What a wonderful and patient man! He was so sweet and encouraging to all the children, and his love of the outdoors was infectious. He introduced my little family to the wonders of the local bird watching hot spots and to The Wilderness Center in Wilmot. I was fortunate enough to chat with him a little after one of the classes, and it is easy to see why so many have such fond memories of him and will miss him. Our condolences to his family and all who loved him.  
The Paceks

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**Jodi** - April 06, 2015 at 02:27 PM

DW

“ Today ( March 6), I just found out that this world lost a giant of a man. I taught school for 32 years in five different states plus over seas with the Department of Defense Dependent Schools. I have had many different principals. Without a doubt, Neel Summers was the most outstanding principal of them all. I can honestly say that I never enjoyed teaching anywhere as much as I did under his leadership at Holmesville Elementary School. Because of him, I did my best teaching at Holmesville. I, too, will always remember how he hypnotized birds and the many weeks I spent with him at Outdoor Ed in Wilmont. What treasured memories! He made me be a better teacher than I ever would have been without his influence. Thank you, Neel, for enriching my life!  
Donna Warren

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**Donna Warren** - March 06, 2015 at 04:28 PM

JA

“ *Neel was a valued leader in the Explorer program in Fredericksburg the last few years. I'll always look to his example when working with students; he cared for the students as individuals and made learning about nature fun. I will miss him.*

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**John Abt** - February 25, 2015 at 08:01 AM

 Jarrett Kelly

“ *sorry for your loss.I had Mr. summers during my time at Holmesville Elementary.I will never forget him hypnotizing birds. he was a very kind man that went out of his way...he made sure I could go to 6th grade camp when my parents were short on money. god gained GREAT one..*

*Mrs.shilah Meyers Kelly*

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**Jarrett Kelly** - February 24, 2015 at 10:23 AM



“ *A sympathy card was purchased for the family of Neel Summers.*



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February 23, 2015 at 05:00 PM



“ I was blessed to attend every class I could possibly take with Mr. Summers. I grew up learning about birds and ecology with him. He was the nicest most gentle man I have ever known and he will never be forgotten. He made an impact on my life for the better. Now, when my daughter and I go hiking I stop and point out everything and hear all the birds all because this great man taught me everything I know! I not only got to take all of his classes, I was lucky enough when I got older to help as a teachers assistant. It's been years, but I think about him everyday. He was such an inspiration.

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**Alexandria Centric** - February 17, 2015 at 11:26 PM

LC

“ When I was young I took every class Neel Summers taught at the enrichment academy. I have such special memories of those classes and time spent at the Wilderness Center with Mr. Summers. His quiet excitement about nature was captivating. I went on to get a degree in Wildlife biology and pursue a career in horticulture. Now as I gather my own children to observe a frog or snake that I have found I know I am passing on that sense of wonder that Mr. Summers shared with me.  
Thank you sir,  
Lisa Willett-Chirayath

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**lisa chirayath** - February 15, 2015 at 09:25 AM

WD

“ To The Family of Neel Summers: We noted in the obituary that Neel served in the U.S. Army. We want you to know that we appreciate his service to our country. Our most heartfelt sympathy goes out to you for your loss. Sincerely, The Daughters of the American Revolution, Wooster-Wayne Chapter, NSDAR

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**Wooster Wayne DAR** - February 15, 2015 at 07:16 AM

CS

“ 4 files added to the album New Album Name



Connie Snell - February 14, 2015 at 09:42 PM

CF

“ I was fortunate to not only have gone to the 6th grade camp but to know him as my Uncle Neely with a lifetime of memories. He always had a kind word and a beautiful smile. He loved his family. Will miss him very much. Hugs Aunt Elsie, Brian and Greg.

Connie Snell & Family - February 14, 2015 at 09:35 PM

SB

“ I was fortunate enough to be able to learn from Mr. Summers and explore the Killbuck swamps bird watching through the Enrichment Academy classes at ATI. I remember being "amazed" as a small boy at how he could hypnotize a bird right before our very eyes! I am grateful for him, and his teaching... and would like to think that I am a better, more caring, teacher and father because of learning from him. Blessings to you, his family, during this time of loss and remembering. Peace and prayers. Seth Bridger

Seth Bridger - February 14, 2015 at 07:42 PM

DM

“ *Neel was my principal all through grade school .he was a good guy will be missed. The first time I was ever paddled in school it was neel and I remember I think he was more upset than me. Rip Mr summers*

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**Dave Montgomery** - February 13, 2015 at 07:49 AM

 David Wellman

“ *Such a great man i remember my senior year helping at camp wanake with him he always had a smile on his face and a cheerful attitude he will be greatly missed*

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**David Wellman** - February 13, 2015 at 05:01 AM

KW

“ *So sorry to hear this!!! I adored Mr. Summers.. I hadnt seen him in probably close to 5-6 years and I ran into him while I was working at Kohls last year. To my surprise, he remembered me, my sister, and my brother. He asked about my brothers wrestling and nursing career... my sisters children... what id been up to through the years, etc. What a truly wonderful man he was. Prayers to Mrs. Summers and the family.*

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**Kayla W** - February 12, 2015 at 08:39 PM

HL

“ So many wonderful memories of Mr. Summers!  
! Teacher principal ams the great bird watching  
at 6th grade camp! ! O and I will never forget  
him eating poison ivy! ! Mr. Summers always  
had the greatest smile. .such a kind heart and  
gentle soul! I feel very blessed to have known  
him and his family! Sending thoughts and prayers to Elsie, Greg &  
Brian! ! MAY YOU ALL FiND STRENGTH and peace in memories  
and each others! ! RIP MR. SUMMERS



Heather Lastohkein - February 12, 2015 at 07:57 PM

JO

“ I can still remember being a little one in kindergarten and coming  
into school to find  
Mr. Summers standing in the hall waiting to greet each student. He  
really put students at ease and created a welcoming environment,  
which is especially important when you are five years old and going  
to school for the first time! This continued throughout my time in  
elementary school. More recently, my family had two special  
celebrations at our home the past two summers, and it meant a lot  
that Mr. and Mrs. Summers were able to attend. His gentle spirit  
and kind smile will be missed by so many, as he truly made a  
difference while on this earth. My thoughts and prayers are with  
Elsie and the rest of his family during their time of sorrow.

Josi - February 12, 2015 at 04:09 PM

MB

“ Mr. Summers was always very kind to me and my children. He  
made us feel welcome at the school and really did care about the  
children and their problems. He was a gentleman in the truest  
sense. May his family find comfort in knowing his gentle spirit has  
gone on to his reward.

Millie Bruce - February 12, 2015 at 01:33 PM

SW

“ Mr. Summers was an amazing man. I first knew him from outdoor education in sixth grade. After I married, I got to know him on a different level because his mother lived next door to my in laws. He cared for his mother so very well, especially in her later years. He was a wonderful example of a family and community leader. My sympathies to his family and friends.

Sharon Wolboldt

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**Sharon Wolboldt** - February 12, 2015 at 10:56 AM

CG

“ Mr. Summers was one of the kindest people I've met! He greeted us everyday as we got off the bus before going into school. He genuinely cared about his students. We used to get in trouble on purpose on the playground so we would be sent to his office. Then he would give us a short talk about getting in trouble and let us play on his typewriter. That was before computers. I remember him at Camp Wanake and he had some blue tennis shoes on. I teased him about those shoes. Little did I know he kept those shoes and wore them to my high school graduation, college graduation and even my wedding reception! Many will miss him so much. Prayers to the family. What an outstanding man!

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**Chasity Gibson-Thiel** - February 12, 2015 at 09:28 AM

JL

“ My four adult children now and two of my grandchildren were in grade school when Mr. Summers was principal. He was a very kind and caring person. You could tell in his interactions with children how much he really cared for them. Praying for peace and comfort for his family.

*Judy Leiner*

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**Judy Leiner** - February 12, 2015 at 09:10 AM

PA

“ Neel Summers was my old "boss", a friend, a member of my church family, a teacher, a father and the list goes on. He was truly one of the very nicest men I have ever met. He had a smile for everyone, he always spoke to each child at Holmesville Elementary, and took time to learn their names. I offer my prayers to his family, Elsie and his sons and their families. May God bless you and keep him forever in your hearts.

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**Pam** - February 12, 2015 at 08:05 AM

KS

“ To me, Neel Summers, was Uncle Neely. I have known him all my life. He was a sweet, gentle uncle who enjoyed his family and brought happiness to those who knew him. There are too many good memories to mention here but I thank God for blessing me with such an uncle.

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**Keith Summers** - February 12, 2015 at 05:45 AM

BS

“ 1 file added to the album *New Album Name*



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**Bobbi Giddings Sevigney** - February 12, 2015 at 04:41 AM

TW

“ *I am sorry to hear about this Mr. Summers was my principal in elementary school. He was always good to me, he listen when we had a problem an give would give caring advice. He took kids on nature walks which was fun. I've never had another principal like him he will be greatly missed!!!*

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**Tasha Witherspoon** - February 12, 2015 at 04:35 AM

DL

“ *Mr. Summers was an asset to the Holmesville Elementary School and a very nice man. Quiet and soft spoken but commanded and earned respect. He always had a smile on his face. And often I wondered about his accent but now that I see he was from Clay County it makes since. Mr. Summers touched a lot of students which in turn made us all better people for knowing him. May God Bless Elsie and the boys in this time of sorrow and reading this wonderful tributes will surely show how important Mr. Summers was to all of us who knew him.*

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**Donna Lemon-Weaver** - February 11, 2015 at 09:41 PM



Amanda  
Ledford

“ *I am so sad to hear about Mr Summers.*

*Mr Summers was my elementary school principal. My fondest memories not him were in the summer months with our Nature Nut group. Those were some of my happiest childhood memories. And Mr Summers passion was infectious. If you never cared about moss on a tree you did by the end of the lesson.*

*He was always so kind and fair. He had a rare gift of making everyone around him feel important. He was a wonderful principle. Always had a smile on his face and ready with an encouraging pat on the back when needed.*

*You will be missed Mr Summers...for you are absolutely someone worth missing.*

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**Amanda Ledford** - February 11, 2015 at 09:25 PM



Travis  
Montgome

“ *I always knew him as Mr summers, the man that always brightened my day, I am only 16 but I had him as a substitute teacher many times and had different times he would come into our classroom and tell us about birds and nature, any time I was around him my day was brightened, Mr summers was a great man, and I am sad to hear he's gone, you will be greatly missed neel summers, rest in peace*

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**Travis Montgomery** - February 11, 2015 at 08:48 PM

NE

“ *Mr. Summers was a wonderful man and I've always remembered the time he spent with us at 6th grade camp! He was an outdoors and bird enthusiast, and he taught us so much! He loved the students and was always friendly and had a warm smile on his face and would always make a point to say hi and ask how you were doing! Prayers to his wife, children and family during this time.*

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**nichole reiners eubanks** - February 11, 2015 at 07:54 PM

BS

“ *I am so grateful to have been a student of Mr. Summers. He was such a large influence on my life. I was known as Robin in 1-4th grade but due to alot of teasing, I wanted to change my name to Bobbi. It was Mr Summers that made that happen as he corrected everyone until they got use to calling me Bobbi. Then came Outdoor education as a 6th grader. I was an extremely picky eater. Mr. Summers promised me and my parents that I would not go hungry, even if he had to drive to McDonalds all 3 meals to feed me! I loved it and returned as a counselor my junior and senior years. I remember watching him talk about his birds and what a joy it was for him to share his love of them with us. I hope and pray that he knows how much I appreciated all he did for me!*

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**Bobbi Giddings Sevigney** - February 11, 2015 at 07:37 PM

KH

“ *He was one of the best substitute teachers in the area and he taught me so much about nature. He was one of those people that you always thought would live forever. Now he will live forever in our hearts. He was greatly loved was will be greatly missed.*

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**Kayla Haycook** - February 11, 2015 at 07:17 PM