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# 'Mr. Western' leaves behind tears, great impact on the Hill

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The day had to arrive sometime, a day that darkens the Western Kentucky University hallways, athletic fields and the region.

"Mr. Western" Lee Robertson passed away Wednesday at age 102, a member of "The Greatest Generation."

Originally from Calhoun, he served in the 44th tank battalion of the U.S. Army from 1942 to 1945. He spent 10 months in the South Pacific, earning five Bronze Arrow Heads and participating in beachhead landings in New Guinea and the Philippines during World War II.

What a life lived. The affable and well-respected Robertson epitomized "The Spirit Makes the Master," WKU's motto.

He was dubbed "Mr. Western" by former WKU President Gary Randell. Robertson loved Western, he served Western and was absolutely dedicated to making it better any way he could.

“I want people to know how valuable this place is, how much it means to the community, how much it means to the state of the world and how great some of our graduates are, what they’re doing out there and how valuable it is to the communities they live in,” Robertson said during a 2022 celebration of his 100th birthday. “We produce some awful good people.”

Certainly, it's clear Western helped produce an awfully good person in Robertson.

His appeal was on display this past spring, when he attended in March the NCAA Watch Party for the men's basketball team at Diddle Arena.

He sat and graciously and enthusiastically greeted dozens of people who approached him to say hello and experience his grace and magnetic personality. His strength continued to exude his demeanor on that day – mind clear, smile big and infectious enthusiasm on full display.

That's just one day. In 102 years, there were so many during which he touched the lives of those at the university and the community.

“People,” Robertson said during the 2022 interview with the Daily News. “I love everybody. The people that are going to be here today, they made some great sacrifices to be here. And they came here because of ol’ Lee — and that’s humbling.”

Robertson came to WKU on the GI Bill and played baseball for the Toppers. He earned a Master's degree in 1957, seven years after earning his undergraduate diploma. He became superintendent of Barren County Schools before returning to WKU in 1960. That's when he became director of alumni affairs. He remained in that position until retiring in 1985.

The Lee Robertson Scholarship Fund has been in existence since Robertson retired in 1985. The scholarship is awarded to a WKU junior, who, aptly in relation to "Mr. Hilltopper's" wishes, submits the most impactful essay themed "What Western Has Meant to Me."

"He was a legend, if there ever was a legend, for WKU," said WKU Alumni Association Executive Director Anthony McAdoo. "(He) retired and never quit working on behalf of WKU."

Rest in peace, "Mr. Hilltopper." You left behind a powerful and lasting legacy with your family and Dear Old Western.