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# 'He was a legend;' Lee Robertson, 'Mr. Western,' dies at 102

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Western Kentucky University President Timothy Caboni presents a Mr. Western award to a man at a 100th birthday party at the Eva and Jim Martens Alumni Center in Bowling Green, Ky. Photo by Grace Ramey McDowell/[grace.ramey@bgdailynews.com](mailto:grace.ramey@bgdailynews.com)

## MORE INFORMATION



'Mr. Western' celebrates turning 101

Robertson takes honor flight

'I'm beginning my second one hundred': Mr. Western turns 100

Historic aircraft to take flight over Bowling Green

Lee Robertson, the World War II veteran who became known around southcentral Kentucky and Western Kentucky University as “Mr. Western,” died early Wednesday morning at the age of 102.

“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.”

Robertson, originally from Calhoun, served in the 44th tank battalion of the U.S. Army from 1942 to 1945. He also spent 18 months in the South Pacific during the war, earning five Bronze Arrow Heads and participating in beachhead landings in New Guinea and the Philippines.

After returning home Robertson attended Western on the G.I. Bill, graduating in 1950 with a degree in health and physical education, according to the WKU Alumni Association. Robertson earned a master’s in educational

administration in 1957 and became superintendent of Barren County Schools that same year.

His first return to Western came in April 1960 when then-WKU President Kelly Thompson asked him to serve as the director of Alumni Affairs and Placement Services.

McAdoo said Robertson is credited with the advent of the association's magazine and several other philanthropy and alumni engagement programs.

Robertson left this role in 1985, moving to Florida to work in the private sector. The Lee Robertson Scholarship Fund was created at WKU shortly after his departure.

He eventually made his second return to Western, serving as the interim director of WKU Glasgow and spending six years as the head coach for WKU's golf team.

Robertson's centenary birthday was celebrated in June 2022 at an event at the Eva and Jim Martens Alumni Center.

Bowling Green Mayor Todd Alcott was present at the event along with each member of the Bowling Green City Commission. They proclaimed the day to be “Lee Robertson Day,” and presented him with the key to the city.

“When you think about it there’s only one Mr. Western, of all the great people that’ve been here and the great things they’ve done – somewhere, I got that title,” Robertson said during the ceremony. “And I don’t know if I deserve it, but I sure do appreciate it.”

McAdoo said when he first came to Western eight years ago, Robertson was the first person he met.

“He welcomed me with open arms and showed me what it means to be a Hilltopper,” McAdoo said. “Everywhere I go, he is the first person that people ask me about.”

He said Robertson’s spirit will live on even after his passing.

“As long as Hilltoppers are alive that were touched by Lee, his spirit will live on,” McAdoo said.

WKU President Timothy Caboni described Robertson’s passing in a post on X as “a tremendous loss for our WKU Family.”

“Through his personal care and intentional connection, Lee touched, and many times transformed, the lives of countless individuals during his 77 years serving WKU,” Caboni wrote. “He demonstrated profound affection for his beloved alma mater, embodying our motto, 'The Spirit Makes the Master,' like no one else.”

WKU Philanthropy & Alumni Engagement stated Wednesday that a memorial service is currently being planned.

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