



Dr. Lee Bodenhamer

MAR 12, 1934 - FEB 20, 2025



Scan to Visit



Table of Contents

Obituary	Page 3
Tribute Wall	Page 6
Media	Page 9



Dr. Lee Bodenhamer

MAR 12, 1934 - FEB 20, 2025

Dr. Lee Bodenhamer passed away peacefully on February 20, 2025 at the age of 90. Born in 1934 in El Dorado, Arkansas, to the late O.L. and Irene Bodenhamer, Lee's life was a blend of intellectual pursuits, generosity, adventure, and a deep love for Arkansas and its people.

Raised by his widowed mother, Lee developed an unwavering dedication to education. He instilled those same values in his family, modeling kindness, determination, curiosity, and humility. A devoted father and grandfather, Lee, fondly known as Bodie, shared his passion for adventure and nature with his loved ones. Together, they canoed the Buffalo River, fished in Alaska, white water rafted across the country, flew kites on many beaches, and camped, backpacked, and climbed the Grand Teton. Forever seeking new challenges, Lee drove a motorcycle cross country and got his pilot's license in his later years.

Lee's commitment to learning shaped not only his life but also his legacy. He earned his BS in Business Administration in 1957 and his MBA in 1961 from the University of Arkansas, followed by a PhD in Finance from Harvard Business School in 1968.

While at Harvard, he taught as a faculty member and pioneered the development of commercial variable annuity investment products. Ultimately, Lee returned to Arkansas, where he founded the First Variable Life Insurance Company in Little Rock. In 1977, he established Meridian Management Company, where he served as president and built it into a successful investment management firm. His first client was The World Bank Employee Retirement Fund, and his investment expertise was featured in prominent publications, including a 1983 cover story in Barron's magazine.

Lee's legacy extended far beyond his business achievements. In 1998, he founded the Bodenhamer Fellowships at the University of Arkansas, a prestigious scholarship program that has provided full tuition and study abroad opportunities to 174 scholars



Obituary

Dr. Lee Bodenhamer

MAR 12, 1934 - FEB 20, 2025

since its inception. This program aims to retain Arkansas's brightest students - now and into the future - while fostering a strong sense of community and contribution. His philanthropy reached public health, education, and conservation initiatives. Lee played a pivotal role in establishing The Nature Conservancy's Rattlesnake Ridge Natural Preserve in Central Arkansas, ensuring its protection and accessibility for the public. Lee also served on numerous boards, focusing on healthcare, higher education, technology, and the Sigma Chi fraternity. His dedication was widely recognized—he received an honorary Doctor of Arts and Humane Letters from the University of Arkansas in 2013, was inducted into the Arkansas Business Hall of Fame in 2008 and was named one of “25 Living Legends” in 2009 by Arkansas Business. In 2017, he was awarded Outstanding Philanthropist by the Association of Fundraising Professionals.

Despite his many accomplishments, Lee remained forever grounded and humble. He was preceded in death by his wife, Beverly, in June 2024. His former wife and the mother of his children, Eleanor Bodenhamer Frank also predeceased him along with his daughter-in-law Melissa Greer Bodenhamer and sons-in-law Justin “Jud” Ternes and Stuart Rosso.

Lee is survived by his sister, Nancy Rosser (Jim) of Kerrville, TX; his children, Ann Ternes Rosso (Wayne Britt) and Bob Bodenhamer of Fayetteville, Jim Bodenhamer (Sue Golden) of Parker, CO, John Bodenhamer (Nina) of Fort Collins, CO, and stepson Gary Apple (Marsha) of Eureka Springs.

He also leaves behind his grandchildren: Erin Ternes (Seth McIntosh), Justin and John Michael Ternes, Lauren Rosso (Turner Tomlinson), Elle Wood (Sam), Hannah Riley (Ben), Leah (Scott Horner), Eliza, Sarah, Abby Jo, Katherine, Emily, Elizabeth, and Lena Bodenhamer; Gigi and Brock Golden; Ashley, Shawn, and Andrew Apple; and Justin, Bryan, and Corey King.

Additionally, Lee is survived by his nephews, Jim Rosser (Leanne) and Jack Rosser (Kim); his niece, Barbie Kline (Ron); and seven great-grandchildren.

A private memorial service will be held, and the family invites you to share a brief story or anecdote in his memory at familyofBodie@gmail.com.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the University of Arkansas Foundation



Obituary

Dr. Lee Bodenhamer

MAR 12, 1934 - FEB 20, 2025

to benefit the Bodenhamer Fellows in the Honors College (Office of Gift Administration 481 S Shiloh Drive Fayetteville AR 72701 or giving.uark.edu) or a charity of your choice.

Funeral arrangements are under the direction of Nelson-Berna Funeral in Fayetteville.



Tribute Wall

Dr. Lee Bodenhamer

MAR 12, 1934 - FEB 20, 2025

TM

Teresa Moses posted:

My condolences to his family and friends. He was one of the kindest gentlemen, and I feel blessed to have had him as a part of my childhood. Sincerely, Teresa Moses

February 24 at 11:26 AM

WE

Worth Camp, Jr, Eldorado Ar posted:

In Eldorado AR's EHS Class of 1952, we had a friendship group/Sunday School Classmates of Lee and Lee's cousin, Harry Bodenhamer, Joe Gathright, Worth Camp, Jr., and others, that occasionally did a Fri/Sat overnight fishing trip - in today's Felsenthal National Wildlife (fishing) Reservation on the Ouachita River-at the Louisiana State Line. My Dad was our SS Teacher and a Stock Investor. He took us fishing in Felsenthal. Our friendship group all went to Fayetteville in September 1952. Retired EIDo Lawyer - Worth Camp, Jr.

February 24 at 10:28 AM

SJ

Susan Jones Boe posted:

I am so sorry for your loss. Every time a contemporary of Momma and Daddy pass into spirit I'm filled with nostalgia and thanksgiving for their generation. Sending you all love and I know your Daddy's memory will be a blessing.

February 23 at 11:40 AM

MD

Madalyn Dortch posted:

One of the kindest, genteel, nice man I ever worked with. The world was made better by his presence.

February 23 at 6:19 AM



Tribute Wall

Dr. Lee Bodenhamer

MAR 12, 1934 - FEB 20, 2025



Gerald Jordan posted:

Dear Family, Elizabeth and I were saddened to read that Lee passed. You know better than we do just what a kind and generous person Lee was. I met him at a campus reception and I was awed. How could someone whose fellowships had done so much to enhance the UofA's reputation for academic achievement be so down to earth. But Lee was exactly that...not just my judgment, but in conversation after conversation with my friends who were quick to validate my impression. And, of course, that was in passing conversations; not questions about "do you know..." On the next occasion that I happened to see Lee, some kind soul pointed to me and asked Lee "Have you met..."? With Lee's quick sense of humor, he turned away and waved his hand downward as if to say "No," then just as quickly he flashed a big smile, shook hands with me and made me feel not only welcome, but also as though we'd been friends for years. We never saw Lee when he didn't greet us with a big smile and add sunshine to our day. Thank you for sharing Lee Bodenhamer with the University of Arkansas. Gerald Jordan, BA '70

February 22 at 10:56 AM



Jim Compton posted:

An Arkansas Treasure

February 22 at 9:05 AM



Julie Cypert posted:

What an accomplished life and wonderful legacy. Condolences to the family.

February 22 at 4:16 AM



Karen McDonald posted:

Love and prayers to the family. Warren and Karen McDonald

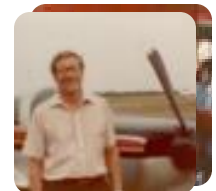
February 22 at 3:33 AM



Justin Ternes shared 2 photos to the **Tribute Wall** album.

Love you Pops ☐

February 21 at 5:48 AM





Tribute Wall

Dr. Lee Bodenhamer

MAR 12, 1934 - FEB 20, 2025



Elle Ternes Wood shared 4 photos to the **Bodie Photos** album.



February 21 at 5:45 AM



Media

Dr. Lee Bodenhamer

MAR 12, 1934 - FEB 20, 2025



Justin Ternes shared 2 photos to the **Tribute Wall** album.

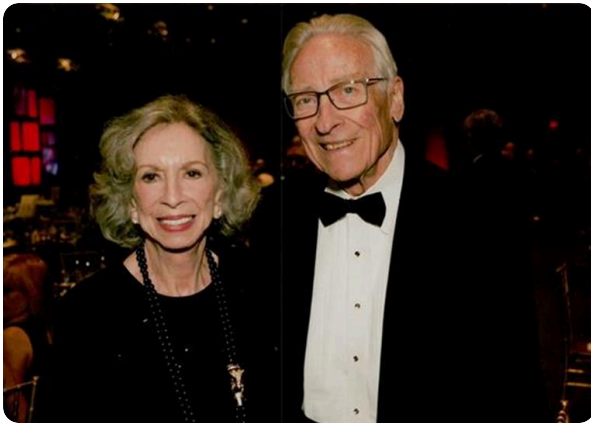
February 21 at 5:48 AM





Elle Ternes Wood shared 4 photos to the **Bodie Photos** album.

February 21 at 5:45 AM





Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Lee by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



Scan to Visit

