

William “Bill” Lefes



William “Bill” Stelio Lefes passed away on Wednesday, May 19, 2021, after a brief stay at Transitions LifeCare in Raleigh. He was born January 8, 1928, in Farrell, Pennsylvania, the second of five children, to the late Stelio Lefes and Stamatia Xenakis Lefes. His formative years were spent growing up on a farm in Sharpsville, Pennsylvania.

He graduated from Thiel College with a BS in Chemistry and Biology and a Masters in Rural Sociology and Agricultural Economics from Penn

State. During his undergraduate years, he traveled to Switzerland on a 4-H International Farm Youth Exchange program for six months, living on a dairy farm and working with the family. Bill’s first job took him to Cape May Courthouse, New Jersey, where he worked for the 4-H Extension Service. It was during his time with the Extension Service that he attended an IFYE conference and met his future bride, Sue Nichols. Bill served in the US Army for two years, returning to New Jersey and the Extension Service.

In 1960 he was hired by the new federal agency, the US Agency for International Development. Bill served with USAID from 1960 until his retirement in 1987. His assignments took him and his family to Somalia, Uganda, Washington D.C., Vietnam, the Philippines, Kenya, Sierra Leone and Ghana. He started in the agricultural sector, but was quickly moved to program development; he ended his career as the USAID Director of Mission for Ghana. His work involved assisting in the creation, implementation and, management of various agricultural and economic development programs in developing countries. Due to his reputation as someone who “got things done” he was often assigned “extra” tasks such as helping to start American schools in Somalia and Uganda.

Bill and Sue retired to Cary, North Carolina, where they became Program Coordinators for North Carolina 4-H International youth exchange programs with LABO in Japan and CAPS in Costa Rica. Bill joined the Cary-Kildaire Rotary Club, served as president of his club and later, governor of Rotary District #7710.

Bill and Sue were members of White Plains Methodist Church and more recently, First United Methodist Church of Cary. Bill enjoyed golfing, traveling with the 4H exchange programs and Rotary, and volunteering with Rotary on their varied projects. He gravitated to the many hands-on projects, enjoying the challenge of hard work.

His pet project during retirement was the restoration of the 1934 Farmall 12 tractor to working order and donating it to the North Carolina Transportation Museum in Spencer. Even in recent years, he continued to take daily walks in the Glenaire community, reading books, writing letters to the editor from time to time and volunteering for the Rise Against Hunger program. He will be missed by family and friends.

Bill is survived by his wife, of 66 years, Sue Nichols Lefes, his son Lee; daughter Patricia and her husband John Donohoo; grandchildren, Jennifer Donohoo and Sarah and husband, Ben Talbert; and great-grandchildren, Luke and Judah as well as nieces and nephews.

A service in his honor will be held May 25 at First United Methodist Church in Cary at 10:30 AM. (Masks are recommended by the church and the family is asking that everyone wear a mask.) There will be a private inurnment with family members. In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to First United Methodist Church, 117 S. Academy Street, Cary, NC 27511; Glenaire Retirement Community (<https://www.glenaire.org/Ways-to-Give/>) or any charity of your choice.