MAX SKELTON

Men’s Skill Division – Charter Member 1978



October 24, 1032 – November 20, 2021

Max Skelton has been bowling since 1945 and active in bowling association work for more than 30 of those years. His bowling ability has been such that he carried over a 200 average for a number of years and won many local and regional tournaments. His career highs in league or tournament play have been a 300 game and a 781 series. His association work has covered every aspect of working in bowling: league, local, state and national. For hhis career, spanning over thirty years of service, the Bowling Council of Oklahoma City is proud to induct Max Skelton into the Oklahoma City Bowling Hall of Fame for Skill.

In 1990, Max was installed as the 77th President of the American Bowling Congress, the highest office that any bowler can hold.

Obituary:

Memorial services for Dr. Max Dee Skelton will be 2:00 Saturday, Dec. 4, 2021, at Criswell Funeral Home.

Dr. Skelton was born on Oct. 24, 1932, and passed away on Nov 20, 2021, in Ada, OK at the age of 89 years. He was the third of three children born to Hal and Gertrude Skelton of Blackwell, OK.

Max was an avid reader of obituaries through the years, and we hope that this one meets his approval and that maybe he might get a tiny laugh over it.

He attended school in the Blackwell area graduating from Blackwell High School in 1950. He first attended college at Northern Oklahoma College in Tonkawa and then graduated with his bachelor’s degree from Central State College in Edmond, OK, and went on to complete his Master’s and Doctorate from the University of Oklahoma…however, it is well known that Max became a die-hard fan of the Oklahoma State Cowboys so much so that when he was asked as a distinguished alum to speak at an OU fundraising event, he inadvertently ended with, “So let’s get out there and support those Cowboys!”

Dr. Skelton was an educator, a farmer, a rancher, an oilman, a bowler, a husband, a father, and he excelled at all of these.

Max was a long-time member of the First Christian Church of Ada serving as an Elder. He also enjoyed recording the daily Dial-a-Prayer each morning before school, making it a race with his daughter, Julie, to get from the car to the church door first.

In 1958, Max married his high school sweetheart, Retta Florence Richmond. Together, they had three children. After Retta passed away in 1969, Max eventually met and married the second love of his life, Barbara Wigley Thompson. Barbara came with three children, too, and from that point on they were the real-life Brady Bunch.

Max started his education career as a teacher in the Oklahoma City area eventually moving into administration serving first as an assistant superintendent in Norman, then as a superintendent of Ada Public Schools, and finally, after retiring from Ada, as assistant superintendent in charge of federal programs at Little Axe Public Schools.

During his service as superintendent of Ada schools, Max was responsible for bringing bus service into the school system. He was also responsible for establishing a women’s basketball program for which his twins were thankful.

At the age of 8, Max became a pin-setter at the Blackwell bowling alley in order to pay for his own bowling. Max bowled in his first national tournament at the age of 12 with a Blackwell women’s team under the name Maxine. In later years, when Max spoke at the National Convention of Women Bowlers, he assured them he could relate.

He continued bowling, in men’s leagues from then on, winning state and national titles in singles and doubles tournaments.

While in college, Max joined a local bowling league and eventually became president of Oklahoma City’s Bowling Association at the age of 26. From that point on, his bowling career flourished. Bowling led him to all parts of the United States and international communities, spreading his knowledge and leadership abilities. One special accomplishment to note is that in the 1960s, he was one of the first to help foster integration after the elimination of the American Bowling Congress’s Caucasian-only membership clause. In his home state tournament, Max volunteered his team to bowl with a team of Black bowlers when other teams refused. Max rose through the ranks to serve as ABC president in 1990. But it was his extraordinary leadership as USA Bowling president that led to the creation of the United States Tenpin Bowling Federation (later USA Bowling).

He became the legislative chairman for the American Bowling Congress for the yearly meeting of representatives from every bowling association. He chaired the meetings for thousands of representatives, and they all loved and respected him.

Throughout his bowling career, Max was inducted in the Ada Bowling Hall of Fame, the Oklahoma City Bowling Hall of Fame, the Oklahoma State Bowling Hall of Fame, and the National Bowling Hall of Fame.

Not only was he active in the administration of bowling but also was a top bowler himself, bowling a perfect 300 in a sanctioned tournament. In fact, he won so many trophies, he donated them to the boy’s and girl’s clubs to use as trophies for the kids.

While working full time as a school administrator and leading bowling organizations, Max was co-owner of D & S Oil Company and also creator and co-owner of Sigma Educational Media. Together with wife, Barbara, Max also owned and operated Skelton Angus Ranch, raising Angus cattle that are to this day admired and recognized throughout the ranching community as some of the best.

Max was preceded in death by his first wife, Retta, parents, Hal and Gertrude Skelton, brothers Harold and Jim, and grandson Tyler Skelton.

He is survived by wife Barbara Ann Skelton of the home; children, Kent Thompson of Stonewall, OK, Steve Skelton (Leslie) of Rolla, MO, Lori Skelton Vaughn of Rolla, MO, Lauri Thompson Ketchum (Roger) of Durant, OK, Kelly Thompson Caudle of Ada, OK, and Julie Skelton Pfeifer (Mark) of Rolla, MO; grandchildren Lauren Postlethwaite (Kevin), Matthew Skelton, Katy Bright (Kevin), Caleb Caudle (Paige), Ty Ketchum (Hillary), Mason Vaughn (Nicole), Kelsey Staples (Nick), Nick Pfeifer, Max Pfeifer, and Erin Pfeifer; plus 8 great-grandchildren and counting….

The family gives special thanks to Jim Rice, Halo Hospice, Brookdale Senior Living Center, and Larry Colbert for their love and care no matter the time of day or night.

In lieu of flowers, the family would appreciate donations to the Alzheimer’s Association or the American Cancer Society.