



Sheldon Ralph Betterly

December 1, 1932 - January 24, 2025

Sheldon Ralph Betterly was born December 1st, 1932, in Huntington, Indiana to Reverend Glen Clifford Betterly and his wife Lillian May (Latsch) Betterly. He was the third of four children, and the second son, born to Glen, age 30 and Lillian, age 34. When Sheldon was 2 years old, the family moved with Glen to pastor churches in Ontario, Canada. The rest of his childhood was spent there where he developed a love for hunting, fishing, and animals.

In 1951, upon his graduation from high school in Port Elgin, Ontario, he moved back to Indiana to attend Huntington College, where he met his future wife, Peggy. Two years later, he joined the US Army where he spent most of 1953 stationed in Michigan, Virginia, Texas, and Maryland, before being shipped overseas to Japan at the end of the Korean War in 1954. It was in the fall before his departure that he and Peggy became engaged. He and his brother Don, served in active duty as conscientious objectors, until he returned to Indiana at the end of 1954. When he returned to the states he worked at a machine shop until he and Peggy were married on April 2, 1955.

The long and happy marriage that Sheldon and Peggy shared began in West Lafayette, Indiana where they lived while Sheldon attended Purdue University, where he earned his Bachelor's degree in Agronomy. Upon his graduation in 1959, Sheldon accepted the role of Golf Course Superintendent for the course that he would build into Chantilly National Golf and Country Club in Virginia.

In 1961, he founded Centreville Sod Growers which he owned and operated for 37 years and would later pass on to his son, Craig. In 1968, the family built a house and moved to Nokesville as he made Centreville Sod his full time business. He worked towards creating higher standards for turfgrass and was the first sod producer to ever grow certified sod in the state of Virginia. After decades of service to the Virginia Turfgrass Council he was awarded Lifetime Membership, and served as the council's president in 1968-69. He received the RD Cake Silver Tray Memorial Award in 1964, and the President's Award in 1984. He was a President and charter member of the Greater Washington Golf Course Superintendents Association, as well as the Virginia Sod Growers, from which he later received a Lifetime Achievement Award. He was a charter member of ASPA (Turfgrass Producers International). Sheldon was a member of the Centreville Methodist Church for 9 years during his time as Superintendent and was on multiple boards and committees. Upon moving to Nokesville he and Peggy became active members of the Nokesville Church of the Brethren family and community.

Along with his many great accomplishments, some things Sheldon will be most fondly remembered by among his family include: camping with friends and family, traveling around Virginia, and throughout the rest of the U.S. Sheldon was known for "never meeting as stranger" and taking genuine interest in the lives and interests of others no matter where he was.

He was probably happiest with a cutting torch in one hand and a welder in the other. Passing on his hard work ethic, his machinery inventions, the way old junk could always be still useful, his love of horses, dogs, kitty cats, and baby pigs, singing just the first line of every song and making up the rest, his love of his farm, rocking babies to sleep with his resonating singing voice. Taking four of his grandsons bravely, alone to Carlisle, PA to enjoy Redskins Training

Camp. Pancake breakfasts at church with his grandkids before Nokesville Day, watching them in the pool and always enjoying their antics.

Sheldon is preceded in death by: his parents; his sisters Shirley (Betterly) Cox and her husband Emmett Cox, Dorothy Ann (Betterly) Tripp; and his infant son. Sheldon's living legacy can be seen in the love of those by whom he is survived: his brother Donald Maurice Betterly, and wife Barbara Betterly of Indiana, and brother in-law Herb Tripp; his wife of 69 years, Peggy Jo (Clouse) Betterly; his son Craig Alan Betterly and his wife, Cynthia (Lomax) Betterly, daughter Sue Ellen (Betterly) Burleson and her husband, Ronald Burleson, daughter Joann Kay (Betterly) Nicholls and her husband, Kevin Nicholls; his grandchildren Philip Mark Betterly and his wife, Tricia (Swider) Betterly, Stephanie Leigh (Bates) Kopf and her husband, Jarad Kopf, Sarah Ann (Burleson) Gower and her husband, Matthew Gower, Thomas Albert Burleson and his wife, Elizabeth (Brown) Burleson, Scott Anthony Betterly, Daniel Travis Bates and his wife, Joamarie (Garcia) Bates, Alexander Ryan Bates, Rachel Neva Bates, and Matthew Minkyoo Nicholls; and his great grandchildren Sarah Elizabeth Gower, Melanie Mae Gower, Natalie Jane Kopf, James Hampton Gower, Leila Josephine Kopf, Sylvie Joann Kopf, Julia Carter Burleson, and Clare Anelle Burleson.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks that you consider a donation to the Nokesville Church of the Brethren. Funeral services will be held at Nokesville Church of the Brethren, 13002 Fitzwater Drive, Nokesville, VA on Saturday, February 1, 2025 at 11:00 AM with the family receiving friends from 9:30 AM until service time. A reception will be held in the church fellowship hall after the service.

Previous Events

Funeral Service

FEB 1. 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM (ET)

Nokesville Church of the Brethren
13002 Fitzwater Drive
Nokesville, VA

Tribute Wall

RM

“ My prayers and condolences to the Betterly family on the passing of Mr. Sheldon. Robert MacFall, BDHS Class of '74

Robert MacFall - February 03, 2025 at 08:23 PM

GB

“ I spent alot of time at the Betterlys house and considered them to be like my second parents. Prayers and Hugs to the family.

Ginger Wood Bennett - February 01, 2025 at 06:58 PM

DB

“ Back when I was at BDHS, there were several evenings when we had school functions that the Betterly family had me over for dinner. It always seemed more like a family function, myself included. My thoughts are with the rest of the family. Although the last time I saw him was when he was in the hospital, he was as perky and outgoing as always. I never saw him "down". His kids are a credit to him, and I will always fondly remember him as one of the "good guys."

Dave Button - January 31, 2025 at 09:29 PM

LC

“ Love Greg, Kristi and Michael Clouse purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of Sheldon Ralph Betterly.



Love Greg, Kristi and Michael Clouse - January 29, 2025 at 08:28 PM

MG

“ The Virginia Tech Turfgrass Team offers its condolences to the Betterly family on Sheldon's passing. Sheldon will always be remembered as one of our industry's early leaders AND better yet, he was an exceptional person that was a friend to all.

Mike Goatley - January 29, 2025 at 01:08 PM

TF

“ The Weekley Family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Sheldon Ralph Betterly.

The Weekley Family - January 29, 2025 at 12:31 PM

TF

“ The Weekley Family purchased the Full Of Love Bouquet for the family of Sheldon Ralph Betterly.



The Weekley Family - January 29, 2025 at 12:31 PM



“ I have many fond memories of singing next to Sheldon during combined holiday services between the United Methodist & Church of the Brethren. He will be greatly missed by the whole community. Blessings to the extended Betterly Family.

Kevin Cernoch - January 29, 2025 at 11:57 AM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Sheldon Ralph Betterly.



January 28, 2025 at 09:59 PM



“ A grove of 5 [Memorial Trees](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Sheldon Ralph Betterly.

January 28, 2025 at 04:43 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Sheldon Ralph Betterly.

January 28, 2025 at 02:24 PM



“ Country Basket Blooms was purchased for the family of Sheldon Ralph Betterly.



January 28, 2025 at 02:24 PM

EY

“ When my son began his fresh produce business, Sheldon took a special interest in the strawberry field. He teased me about my picking berries by hand and was delighted to bring me a device that looked like a snow sled on wheels that he had made in his shop. “So you don’t have to bend over all the time,” he said with a grin. I was touched by his thoughtfulness and he was proud to have put his talents to a practical use.

Elaine Yankey - January 28, 2025 at 10:22 AM

AH

“ Andy & Audrey Hutchison planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Sheldon Ralph Betterly.

Andy & Audrey Hutchison - January 28, 2025 at 08:51 AM

AH

“ Andy & Audrey Hutchison purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of Sheldon Ralph Betterly.



Andy & Audrey Hutchison - January 28, 2025 at 08:51 AM