

Eugene R. Benner, age 76, of Bryan, Ohio, passed away Saturday, May 23, 2009 at the Bryan Care and Rehabilitation Center.

Mr. Benner was born October 7, 1932 in Bryan to Raymond & Evelyn (Wagner) Benner. He was a U.S. Army veteran and served his country as a soldier in the Korean War from 1953 to 1955.

Gene graduated from Wilmington College in Wilmington, OH with a Bachelor of Science in Education in 1957 and was the first graduate of Wilmington to pursue athletic training as a career. He later received his Master's degree from Indiana University.

Following graduation, Gene began his career as an Assistant Athletic Trainer at the United States Military Academy in West Point, NY. He worked there until 1961 when he became the Head Athletic Trainer at the University of Maine. Gene would leave Maine one year later to become the Head Athletic Trainer at Hofstra University in Hempstead, Long Island. While at Hofstra, Gene assisted the New York Jets with their training camps that were held on campus. In 1965, Gene returned to West Point to work closely with the football program and under the tutelage of late NATA Hall of Famer Ed Pillings. He would stay for two years before accepting the Head Athletic Trainer position at the University of Cincinnati. Gene enjoyed 9 years at Cincinnati before leaving for Kansas State University where he was the head football athletic trainer. Gene returned to West Point in 1977 following his time at Kansas State. He assumed the Head Athletic Trainer position in 1980 until his retirement in 1992.

Gene truly enjoyed sharing his stories from all the different places he had worked. He took exceptional pride in the Army cadet-athletes that would later graduate and fight our country's wars on many fronts. He enjoyed their successes in both the military and in the business worlds as well as mourns in their losses in war. He looked forward to Army Football reunions where he could catch up with many of the players whose lives he touched. He had a particular tough love approach with new cadets. Most would take extraordinary measures to avoid interaction with Gene. After Gene saw they had "paid the price", he would take care of them as if they were his own kids. As most would agree, he was a true character.

He is survived by cousins: William and wife, Shirley Brannan of Waterville, OH, Stephen and wife, Loretta Brannan of Pettisville, OH and Jennifer Brannan Phillips of Mesa, AZ. His parents and his long time companion, Josephine Hogan of Highland Falls, NY, preceded him in death.

A memorial service to celebrate the life of Eugene R. Benner will be held at a later date. Burial will take place at Shiffler Cemetery in Williams County, Ohio.