



Earl Dean Waters

August 7, 1935 - August 8, 2025

Earl Dean Waters, 90, of Virginia Beach, VA, passed away peacefully on August 8, 2025, surrounded by his family at Lake Taylor Nursing Home. A memorial service will be held on Friday, August 22, 2025, at 2:00pm at Kings Grant Presbyterian Church, 745 Little Neck Rd, Virginia Beach, VA.

Born August 7, 1935, in Nunnely, TN, Earl grew up a true country boy, without electricity or running water, and carried a fondness for his Tennessee roots throughout his life. As the protective and mischievous older brother to Peggy, he loved playing pranks and stirring up trouble while running around on his family land known as “the ridge.” His curiosity and drive carried him far from that small-town home, but he never forgot where he came from.

A lifelong learner, Earl earned multiple degrees and seized every opportunity to expand his knowledge. After graduating from high school in 1953, he attended Martin College on a work-study program, then earned his Bachelor’s degree in English and Spanish from Lambuth College. He began teaching high school English in Mt. Pleasant, TN while pursuing a Master’s degree in Education Administration at Peabody College in Nashville, rising at 4am on weekends to make the 80-mile trip to class, study, and occasionally enjoy a night out with friends.

Earl’s love for the Spanish language blossomed with a University of Georgia

summer immersion program, followed by life-changing summers studying in Puerto Rico and Guadalajara, Mexico. These experiences deepened not only his fluency but his love for travel, culture, and connection. He also managed to enjoy a Cuba Libre or two along the way.

In 1962, Earl accepted a position as a college professor teaching Spanish at Montreat College in the Blue Ridge Mountains, where he met Carole Upchurch, the Dean's administrative assistant. Their courtship grew among the mountain views, leading to their marriage in Miami, FL, in November 1965. That same year, they settled in Virginia Beach, where Earl began a long career teaching Spanish at Cox High School, ultimately heading up the language department. Known for his humor and quirky teaching style, he often brought lessons to life through stories of his "imaginary friend" Paco, so convincingly that even his daughters were asked if Paco was actually a real friend to their dad (much to their chagrin).

Outside the classroom, Earl was an avid reader, woodworker, whittler, and crossword enthusiast. In his younger years, he loved running at dawn, tending to his yard, and traveling, often on road trips to explore his Native American heritage. Summers were spent painting houses for extra income, a skill his daughters benefited from many times over. He taught them to drive stick shift with patience, encouraged their love of reading, and helped them ace their English papers with his trusty red pen.

Known as "Paw Paw" to his two grandsons, Earl delighted in cultivating their shared hobbies. He built them extensive collections of state and national park quarters, always eager to add the newest find. He never missed a chance to read them a story or watch their favorite shows together, and he strengthened their bond with a playful tradition of collecting superhero T-shirts and proudly donning his latest Superman, Batman, or Pokémon shirt whenever the boys came to visit.

Earl spent his final year at Lake Taylor, where he enjoyed bingo, rummikub, reading non-fiction, and creating art. Known as the community's Jeopardy champion for his sharp knowledge of literature and history, he will be dearly missed.

Earl is survived by his wife of 59 years, Carole; daughters Karen Waters and Laura Hatch (Ted); and grandsons Griffin and Spencer. He will be remembered for his dad jokes (oh the pun), quest for learning, and love of his family.

The family is deeply grateful to the many healthcare professionals who walked alongside Earl in his later years. Their kindness, patience, and compassion made a difficult journey gentler, and the family will never forget the care he received. To the staff and community at Lake Taylor, thank you for treating Earl not just as a patient, but as family.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Virginia Beach Rescue Squad or Helping Hands of Hickman County Food Pantry.

Tribute Wall

MB

“ *MICHAEL BATES sent a virtual gift in memory of Earl Dean Waters*



MICHAEL BATES - September 01, 2025 at 04:04 PM



“ *...so saddened to hear of Earl's passing, Earl was my cousin and my mother's nephew, but if one knew them you know he was more like a brother to her whom she loved dearly...she looked so forward to his visits and there time together, be it on some day trip or sitting around just talking ...we all loved Earl.
R.I.P Sir*



James Arthur (Tank) & Dana Atkinson - September 01, 2025 at 10:08 AM

RG

“ *Ronald Gammons lit a candle in memory of Earl Dean Waters*



Ronald Gammons - August 31, 2025 at 10:40 AM

MB

“ *MICHAEL BATES sent a virtual gift in memory of Earl Dean Waters*



MICHAEL BATES - August 31, 2025 at 07:03 AM

BC

“ *Earl and I had many conversations. I was really unaware of his education and had never none he also spoke Spanish . Earl was a first cousin to my mother and most of our conversations were about the family, in the old days. We did share a love of music . I do miss those easy and kind conversations. God bless his family I'm sure he is vary missed.*

Barry Choate - August 30, 2025 at 03:50 PM

CH

Barry, beautifully stated.

Charlotte - August 30, 2025 at 06:47 PM

CS

“ *1 file added to the tribute wall*



Charlotte Staggs - August 30, 2025 at 03:20 PM

CS

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Charlotte Staggs - August 30, 2025 at 03:19 PM

CS

“ *“Cousin Earl” was one of my best friends. He was a Spiritual guide in the Native ways, a teacher in being creative in the garden, a fellow follower in the paths of St. Francis. His friends a family here looked forward to the times he came to spend on the ridge sharing with us his presence and his wisdom. A-HO!*

Charlotte Staggs - August 30, 2025 at 03:14 PM

CS

“ *Charlotte Staggs sent a virtual gift in memory of Earl Dean Waters*



Charlotte Staggs - August 30, 2025 at 03:06 PM