



WEST LIBERTY - William Edsel (Bill) Bailey, 85, passed away under Hospice Care at Saint Joseph Hospital in Lexington, May 6, 2016. He was born in Stacy Fork in Morgan County on November 7, 1930. He was preceded in death by his parents John and Lula Jones Bailey and a son Michael Bailey. He is survived by his wife Betty Lou Elam, two brothers Jim and Bob Bailey of West Liberty, two children Suzanne Bailey Marsh and Jim Bailey both of California, a stepson Greg Elam of Lexington and grandchildren Alexander Bailey, Dave Beeler and Christina Dimitriadis of California, Julia Dimitriadis of New York, Andrew Elam, Sara Linda Elam and Elizabeth Elam Kinney of Lexington and Gregory Elam II of Los Angeles, California.

One of 11 children, Bill moved from Kentucky to Chicago in the late 1940s to seek greater work opportunities; he later served in the US Navy as an aviation radio operator and afterward, attended the University of Illinois where he graduated with a B.A. degree. He married Jan Briggs, they moved to California and raised a family in San Jose.

Bill founded Bestline Products and was considered a pioneer in the direct marketing industry, building Bestline into a highly successful multinational company. As a result of his philanthropic efforts on behalf of orphans in San Jose, CA, Bill was granted a personal audience with Pope Paul VI in 1968.

In 1972 Bill received the coveted Horatio Alger Award personally presented by Dr. Norman Vincent Peale “for distinguished service to youth, enhancing the American traditions of individual initiatives, perseverance, integrity, and love for freedom.” He has also been awarded the prestigious Golden Plate Award as a “Captain of Industry.”

Bill returned to Morgan County in the late 1980s. His first marriage had ended amicably in the mid-1970s and in 1986 he married Betty Lou Elam, and reconnected with his Kentucky roots. Maintaining a home in Lexington as well as West Liberty, KY, Bill continued to pursue his passion for golf at Pleasant Valley Country Club in West Liberty, reading extensively and mentoring CEOs and entrepreneurs throughout the country up until his death. He gave tremendous joy to his extended family and radiated positive energy to all that knew him.