Remembering Dr. Watson
Economics professor remembered as caring man

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On Sunday, Sept. 3, more than 100 people shared memories of the late John Keith Watson, Ph.D., through laughter and tears at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette Alumni Center.

Friends, family and colleagues shared pictures and stories about Watson, who died Thursday, Aug. 31, at 67 years old. Clad in formal attire, attendees laughed and cried as they remembered Watson as a jovial, humble man that impacted all their lives.

“He never said anything bad about anyone, he always saw the good in other people and I never heard anyone say anything bad about him,” said Robert Hebert, Ph.D., a previous department head of economics at Auburn University.

An economics professor at UL Lafayette since 1988, Watson also taught economics at Oklahoma State University and Auburn University.

He had many published works, but was a firm believer in quality over quantity, reportedly saying on multiple occasions: “When I have something important to say, I’ll say it.” Attendees said he believed in focusing more on subject matter, solving problems and answering questions instead of publishing as much as possible.

Watson’s wife, Patricia Watson, said before his passing he explained he did not want people to “make a fuss,” so the family hosted the visitation sans sermons, prayers, flowers or speeches to honor him.

“Left: John Keith Watson, Ph.D.; Above: a table at the Alumni Center is adorned with things he enjoyed.”

Watson’s memories and a good time,” Patricia Watson said.

Reared in Beaumont, Texas, Watson earned his bachelor's degree at Lamar University and his bachelor's degree and doctorate at Texas A&M University.

“It seemed as though he knew everything,” Katherine Watson, John Keith Watson’s daughter-in-law, said. “But most intriguing of all is that he didn’t care if you knew that he knew everything.”

 Asked if he had any fond memories of Watson, Hebert replied, “All of my memories of Keith are fond memories.”

Remembered as a jubilant man who held a love for fishing, woodworking and hunting, and noted for once capturing an infant shark and its mother, Watson was also known as a good-natured man who enjoyed taking road trips to see elk. He also enjoyed food and cooking for friends and family. He reportedly had a talent for captivating an audience and was the type of person who enjoyed seeing others happy.

Watson affected the people around him, whether it was giving advice or inspiring a friend to be more courageous.

“He was a very nice person and he made the university a better place with that kind of calm, student-oriented niceness,” said Mark Smith, Ph.D., a professor of management at UL Lafayette.

The Watson family is creating a scholarship called the John Keith Watson Memorial Award to honor Watson’s passion for the university and for economics. It will be awarded to an outstanding graduating senior in economics from UL Lafayette.

Those interested in contributing can contact B.I. Moody III, College of Business Administration.