



## Abe LeVon "Lee" Balzer

May 31, 1937 - May 12, 2025

Abe LeVon "Lee" Balzer was born May 31, 1937, in Liberal, Kansas to Abe and Helen (Hamm) Balzer of Hooker, Oklahoma, joining a loving family which included one brother, Robert Balzer. Lee's early and teen years were spent on the farm and in that rural community. He attended schools in Adams, Oklahoma, including 2 years at Adams High School.

He attended Meade Bible Academy in Meade, Kansas, for his junior and senior years. There he met his future wife, Alice Zielke of that community. During his high school years, his parents helped establish the Gospel of Grace Church in Hooker, which became Lee's home church.

Lee attended Grace Bible Institute (later Grace University) in Omaha, Nebraska for two years. After his marriage to Alice on June 14, 1957, he earned his bachelor's degree from the University of Oklahoma in 1959, and his master's degree in 1960.

Lee and Alice then moved to Mission, Kansas, where Lee taught science at Shawnee Mission East High School from 1960 to 1962, and at Shawnee Mission West from 1962 to 1964.

In August 1961, their son, Cary LeVon, was born. Three years later, the family moved to Columbus, Ohio where Lee started his work for the National

Science Foundation and began a doctoral program at The Ohio State University. In December 1964, their daughter, Tanya Suzanne was born.

After completing his doctorate in 1968, the family moved to Bellingham, Washington, where Lee served in the biology department faculty at Western Washington University.

At each of the places they lived, they were very involved in church. Lee served in many capacities in church and community including choir, church council, long range planning, and advisory boards.

After seven years in Bellingham, they relocated to Seattle to assume positions at Seattle Pacific University. Lee served in the science faculty and Alice worked part-time in the music department office. During those 13 years, Lee's position changed from faculty to administration, and he assumed the role of Assistant Dean of Education, followed by the Dean of Arts and Sciences.

During Lee's years in Washington State, he and colleagues coauthored a number of middle and high school textbooks in biology and life sciences for the Scott Foresman company.

In addition, he and colleagues contributed to science textbooks for their world countries for UNESCO (United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization).

While serving at Seattle Pacific, their children finished high school and college. Both married Seattle Pacific alums: Cary to Tracy Vanderbur in 1983, and Tanya to Todd Reichert in 1988. Each were married in the family home church, Seattle First Free Methodist. In spring of 1988, their first granddaughter, Kelsey, was born to Cary and Tracy in Wilmore, Kentucky.

In 1988 the call came for Lee to serve as President of Tabor College in Hillsboro, Kansas. With this new opportunity Lee took responsibility for leadership of the college and Alice became campus hostess for college events on campus and in their home.

In the Spring of 1994 Lee received a call to the presidency of John Brown University. After much prayerful discussion, he and Alice moved to Siloam Springs. Alice again served in her role as campus hostess both in their home and on campus.

Two granddaughters were born during their transition to JBU: Madison was born to Todd and Tanya in California, and Langley was born to Cary and Tracy in Washington State. Two years later a son was born to Todd and Tanya, bringing their number of grandchildren to four in total.

In his many years of service to Christian higher education, Lee's leadership was characterized by his conviction that scripture and science are not in conflict but rather support each other in the pursuit of truth and point to God as Creator. His other great passion in Christian higher education was the spiritual formation of the whole person; that professors must integrate their faith with their teaching in ways that foster the faith development of their students.

In June 2004, after serving ten years at John Brown University, Lee and Alice retired to Bella Vista, Arkansas. In retirement they stayed connected to the JBU community by attending meetings and events. During these years each of the grandchildren married: Kelsey to Jordan Howard; Madison to Chase Colvin; Langley to Jacob Burton; and Brandon to Abby Nixon.

In the Fall of 2020, caring for their lake home and property in Bella Vista

began to take its toll on Lee's and Alice's health, so they returned to Siloam Springs to be closer to family. That family continues to grow, now with six great-grandchildren: Emery and Brooks Reichert; Marigold Burton; Elizabeth, Josephine and newborn Gwendolyn Howard.

Lee's health declined significantly in December 2024 and resulted in his and Alice's relocation to an assisted living facility in Tulsa, located very near Tanya and Todd, their daughter and son-in-law. Lee went to be with the Lord on Sunday night, May 11, 2025.

June 14, 2025, would have been Lee and Alice's 68th anniversary. Throughout their marriage, they joyfully welcomed family, friends and members of the various college communities into their home. Time spent with family, friends and community was among their greatest loves, and with each change in location and occupational status they formed friendships with them that would endure throughout their lives.

A celebration of life will be held at the Cathedral of the Ozarks at John Brown University on Saturday, May 31, 2025, at 2:00 p.m.

# Previous Events

## Celebration of Life Service

MAY 31. 2:00 PM (CT)

Cathedral of the Ozarks  
2000 W. University  
Siloam Springs, AR 72761

# Tribute Wall

SK

“*Dr. Balzer was one of my two favorite professors at Western Washington State College, now Western Washington University, in Bellingham, WA. I had him for biology as well as two elementary science education courses required for my degree in elementary education. He recommended me for employment, as a student, with Western’s Science Education lab (even though I was neither a science major nor minor). Later I was fortunate to see him when I was taking additional classes in school administration at Seattle Pacific University. Thanks to the internet, I’ve been able to follow his career as President of Christian colleges, a position for which I am sure he fulfilled with great integrity and a Christ-like manner. My thoughts are with his expanding family, who can be comforted with the knowledge that they will see him again. Thank you, Dr. Balzer, for being such a wonderful ambassador for our Lord!!*”

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**Susan Kaelin** - June 19, 2025 at 12:49 PM

CB

“*Lee was such an inspiration and wonderful boss and friend. He and Alice reached out and became our friends and mentors as well. They left the image of Christ wherever they went. They were missed when they left here and I know people there are missing him. Alice is an amazing person. Praying for strength and wisdom for her as she and the children walk through the grief process to healing.*”

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**CLARENCE and Helen BISHOP** - June 01, 2025 at 03:29 AM

MF

“*LeVon was my college roommate our sophomore year. We had similar farm backgrounds and shared many similar experiences and values. My condolences to Alice and the family.*”

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**Melvin Friesen** - May 31, 2025 at 01:26 PM



“ *Blue & White Sympathy Basket was purchased for the family of Abe LeVon "Lee" Balzer.*



May 30, 2025 at 05:47 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Abe LeVon "Lee" Balzer.

May 29, 2025 at 07:49 PM



“ *Pink & White Sympathy Basket was purchased for the family of Abe LeVon "Lee" Balzer.*



May 29, 2025 at 07:49 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Abe LeVon "Lee" Balzer.

May 29, 2025 at 12:26 PM



“ *Dish Garden with Fresh Cut Flowers was purchased for the family of Abe LeVon "Lee" Balzer.*



May 29, 2025 at 12:26 PM

SB

“ Lee was a true gentleman. We especially enjoyed Lee and Alice when we were in the same Care Group at Highlands Church in Bella Vista. What a great family. President of a University was the right job and passion for Lee. Alice was always there for support.

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**SHELDON BEARROOD** - May 17, 2025 at 09:32 PM