Wesley (Wes) W. Palokangas

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Wesley (Wes) W. Palokangas, 68, of Winona died Friday, March 9, 2012, at Gunderson Lutheran Medical Center in La Crosse, Wis., from complications following chemotherapy treatments for lymphoma.

Wes was born March 11, 1943, to Rudolph and Melida (Wuollet) Palokangas in Menahga, Minn. On Aug. 3, 1963, he was united in marriage to Jane Merila in Virginia, Minn. They were blessed with two children, Jill and Erik.

On July 15, 1962, he joined the U.S. Army National Guard while working many years in sales and as business owner. On May 5, 1984 Wes reenlisted in the Army National Guard and Reserves. He served many years as a recruiter and also served as the non-commissioned officer in charge for the 2nd Battalion 135th Infantry Southwest Recruiting and Retention Team. In 1994, he was promoted to master sergeant. During these years, Wes earned numerous awards and honors. He is in the Recruiting and Retention Hall of Fame.

Wes was a beloved husband, father, grandfather, brother and friend. His passions included family, friends, golf, bowling and woodworking. He was always available to lend a helping hand. He had a special love for animals, which demonstrated his kind spirit.

Those left to cherish his memory include his wife, Jane of Winona; children, Jill (Brad) Behnke of Mahtomedi, Minn., and Erik (Lara Berzinski) Palokangas of Indianapolis; grandchildren, Max and Cameron; siblings, Clyde (Nell) Palokangas of Virginia, Minn., Beverly (Leo) Cherro of Aurora, Minn., and Dennis (Jane) Palokangas of Eveleth, Minn., and many extended family members and friends. Wes was preceded in death by his parents.

A memorial service will be at 2 p.m. Wednesday, March 14, at Fawcett-Junker Funeral Home in Winona, with Pastor Jeff Franko officiating.

Military burial honors will be provided by American Legion Leon J. Wetzel Post 9. A luncheon will follow at Westfield Golf Course. Visitation will take place from 5 to 7 p.m. Tuesday, March 13, at Fawcett-Junker Funeral Home in Winona and beginning at 1 p.m. Wednesday at the funeral home. Services entrusted to Fawcett-Junker Funeral Home and Cremation Services, Winona.