

Facts & Traditions

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Mission of the Society

To assemble, preserve, and interpret the history of Southeast New Mexico and to promote a greater interest, understanding, and appreciation of the area's past.

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In Memory of James Phelps White III

James Phelps White III passed away peacefully on March 27, 2025, in Ocala, Florida where he lived for the past 10 years. Born on July 1, 1932, in Roswell, New Mexico, he was the only child of Mary Beers and JP White Jr. and grandson of Lou Tomlinson and James Phelps White Sr.

Phelps was raised in Roswell, where he learned to appreciate his family heritage, especially in the history of farming and ranching in Chaves County. He cherished his experiences as a son, father, grandfather, and great-grandfather. Phelps could spot the shimmer of an arrowhead from a mile away, cast a fly rod like a pro, identify any bird species, and with profound knowledge and wit, he could weave a story about New Mexico history like no other. He loved the annual outings to the family ranch for sheep shearing season and took pleasure in winning bets on the golf course! He was passionate and knowledgeable about many things, especially the night sky, the avian world, and all things about the environment and livestock. One of Phelps' favorite times of the year was during pecan harvest season, receiving an invitation from a representative at Poor Clare Monastery of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Roswell to "shake" their pecan trees. The Poor Clares remember him as a friend who served others from his heart. Phelps is remembered by his friends as an intelligent, kind-hearted New Mexico gentleman and as a generous friend to many.

Phelps attended New Mexico Military Institute, graduating from high school in 1950 and from NMMI Junior College in 1952. He is the former president of the NMMI Foundation Board of Directors. He graduated from the University of Texas at Austin in 1955, where he met and married Judith Anderson, the mother of their children. He was commissioned in the United States Army as a 2nd Lieutenant, Armor Division, and posted at Fort Knox from 1955-57. He was honorably discharged in 1962 as a 1st Lieutenant, completing his service in active and inactive reserve status. Phelps was proud to be a veteran, but more importantly, he was always concerned about the modern-day military and the safety of our troops overseas. He loved engaging with other veterans.

