



Seth Nickolas Bowles

December 21, 1945 - May 11, 2026

Seth "Nick" Bowles, of Tranquillity, California, passed away peacefully on May 11, 2026, at the age of 80. Born on December 21, 1945, Nick lived a life shaped by service, education, and a deep devotion to his family and community.

Nick is survived by Barbara Bowles, his beloved wife of 59 years; his daughter, Tracy Ellison, and her husband, John Ellison; his son, Nick Bowles, and his wife, Kathleen Wattenburger; his brother and sister-in-law, Steve and Sally Bowles; and his cherished grandchildren, Aubree Ellison, Clay Ellison, and Logan Bowles.

Nick was drafted into the United States Army shortly after high school, where he served his country as a pharmacist. During a winter break from boot camp, he married Barbara — beginning a partnership that would last 59 years. After his military service, he attended Fresno State, where he earned his Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Education – Teacher Preparation — the work that would define most of his career. His teaching and FFA advisor tenure at Tranquillity High School focused on agriculture production, livestock, and leadership — helping his students develop skill, responsibility, and confidence. Nick chose to make his home in Tranquillity, close to the rural high school where he taught, and he was never one to sit still. Over the years, he drove the school bus, coached, and managed the community pool through the summer months. As one of the few teachers who lived in the small town, he was on call whenever families and students needed him — becoming

Tranquillity's go-to resident, the person people turned to for help, for support, and for a steady hand. He retired as a Golden Plains Unified School District high school principal at the same school he started his career at, a role that reflected the respect and trust he had earned throughout his lifetime of teaching and mentoring young people.

Beyond his career, Nick gave generously of his time and heart to the people around him. He was a longtime member of the San-Tran Lions Club, helping the community wherever he was needed, and a devoted supporter of the Big Fresno Fair Livestock and youth programs, where his involvement touched the lives of hundreds of young people over the years. He officiated high school softball, baseball, wrestling, and football — earning the respect of athletes, coaches, and families across the area.

Nick also found a deep love for barbecuing and feeding the people he cared about. He had barbecued for years, but after retirement he took it to another level — catering for the masses and pulling the BBQ trailer that read “Nick’s BBQ”. From high school football games and FFA banquets to Lions Club gatherings, from teachers and classified staff to the Pop Warner football families, he showed up with his “Nick’s BBQ” and a smile. Some of his biggest spreads served thousands of 4-H and FFA youth at the Fresno Fair. Anyone who tasted Nick's BBQ was hooked for life — always asking when he'd cook again. What he loved most was the camaraderie of it: the smiles around the BBQ pit and the table, the easy conversation, and the simple pleasure of watching people enjoy a meal he had made for them.

Nick and Barbara also opened their home through the foreign exchange student program, hosting four students who attended Tranquillity High School. Long after their exchange years ended, those students continued to stay in touch — sharing their lives, their growing families, and their milestones with Nick and Barbara over the years. Those lasting bonds were a tribute to who Nick was; warm and sometimes rough, steady, and someone whose door — and heart — were always open.

At the heart of everything Nick had a simple belief: that young people grow

into their best selves when they are kept busy, surrounded by support, and given good reasons to stay out of trouble. He believed deeply in the power of education, community, and hard work to shape a life. He wanted the kids he taught, coached, and mentored to make good decisions — to think not just about the moment in front of them, but about the kind of future they were building. He gave them his time, his guidance, and his steady belief that they could become something great.

Plans for a Celebration of Life will be announced at a later date.

Nick will be remembered for his quiet strength, his lifetime of service, and the love he gave so generously to his family, his students, and his community. He will be deeply missed.

Tribute Wall

TE

“ 3 files added to the tribute wall



Tracy Ellison - May 22 at 07:13 PM



“ 27 files added to the album Tribute



Tracy Ellison - May 22 at 06:39 PM



“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Tracy Ellison - May 22 at 06:37 PM



“ *To All, we are planning a Celebration of Life this summer in Tranquillity. We will post information here. Please do not send flowers. If you would like to donate to the San Joaquin - Tranquillity Lions Club on behalf of Nick Bowles please send you donation to:
San-Tran Lions Club
P.O. Box 442
Tranquillity, CA, United States, 93668*

Tracy Ellison - May 22 at 06:24 PM

MK

Great obituary. Very well written and an accurate reflection of Nick. He was an awesome man who gave of himself to make his community a better place. I will miss you. My sincerest condolences to his wonderful children and family.

Matt Kinnunen - June 01 at 11:28 PM