

# Remembering James

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James Ethan Willis, age 93 years, of Jefferson City, Mo., passed away unexpectedly at SSM Health St. Mary's Hospital on Thursday, April 23, 2020.

He was born on April 15, 1927 in a cabin built by his father in Macks Creek, Mo. He was the son of James R. and Mary (Baker) Willis. He was the youngest of six children and had five older sisters. James often talked about his

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With long life  
I will satisfy Him and  
show Him my salvation.

PSALM 91:16 (NIV)

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older sisters doting on him. Their love for him taught him the value of caring for others. He was raised on his family farm, working along side his father. James always treasured those years growing up in Macks Creek.

He was married to the love of his life, Marjorie (Grimes) Willis, on October 28, 1956 at Greenfield, Mo. She preceded him in death on April 7, 2013.

A lifelong resident of the Central Missouri area, James graduated from Macks Creek High School in 1945. He then began his college career at Southwest Baptist College, where in 1952 he received an associate degree in education.

After graduation James enlisted in the United States Army, where he served in the 7th infantry, north of the 38th parallel, in North Korea during the Korean War. He was honorably discharged in 1954 as Sergeant First Class. While stationed in Korea, he started a makeshift school in a tent teaching his fellow soldiers to read and write.

After returning from Korea, he served in the Army Reserves for seven years. A proud veteran, he had the opportunity to participate in the Honor Flight in 2014, an experience he considers one of his greatest memories.

When he returned from the Korean War, James went

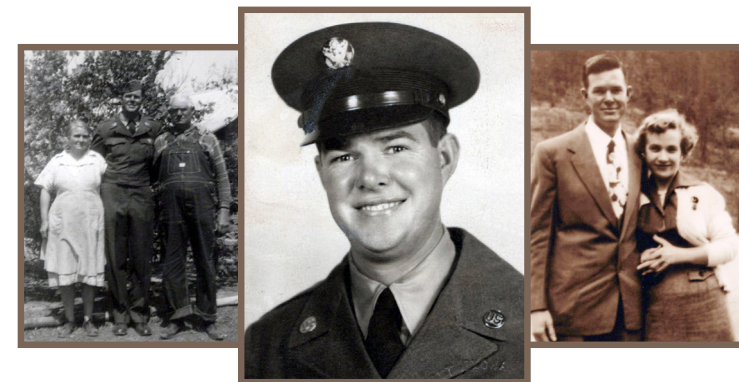
back to school and attended Missouri State University (then Southern Missouri State University) in Springfield, Mo, graduating with a Bachelor's Degree in Education. He later received his Master's Degree in Social Work at the University of Missouri – Columbia in 1960. James went on to receive his PhD in Philosophy in 1968 from MU.

James started his professional career as a teacher in several one-room schools in Camden County. After returning from Korea and furthering his education, He began his career as a social worker. He was the director of Child Welfare in Laclede and Camden County in the late 1950's. He and Marjorie with his children, Jeffrey and MaryAnn, moved to Jefferson City in the 1960's to begin working with the Missouri Division of Family Services. Being a social worker was his passion for over 39 years, until he retired in 1989.

James accepted Jesus as his Lord in 1945 in an Assembly of God tent revival in Branch, Mo. He was shortly thereafter baptized in the Niangua River. James loved the Lord, and he read the Bible and spent time in Prayer every day of his life.

He was a member of the Macks Creek Masonic Lodge. He recently earned honors for being a member for 75 years. James was also a member of the Eastern Star, Victoria Chapter No. 14, for over 65 years, which was an activity he enjoyed with Marjorie.

James loved being outdoors and always enjoyed hunting, even raising his own hunting dogs. An avid reader, James loved to talk about how he was taught to read by his sister, Jewell, at a young age. He could always be found reading a book, sometimes up to 5 books a week. He enjoyed researching his family history and genealogy, and he wrote extensively about his family's lineage. James was always active and healthy, and he could be seen riding his bike on the Katy Trail or walking at the Runge Nature Center (an activity he enjoyed until a



year ago). He was a lifelong learner and loved watching current events and politics.

James was a true gentleman in every way and was a kind-hearted and honorable man. He was a man of his word. He was a devoted husband, father and grandfather who loved his family with all his heart. He will be dearly missed. There will never be another like him.

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In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie,  
promised before the world began;

TITUS 1:2 (KJV)

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Survivors include: his beloved daughter Mary Ann Willis of Jefferson City, Mo.; one daughter-in-law, Bird Willis of Carbondale, Il.; one brother-in-law, James Carl Grimes (Lil) of Branson Mo.; a Sister in Law, Sharlene Bennett Grimes of Lebanon Mo ; five grandchildren, Amber, James Matthew, Kelsey, Benjamin, and Jacob; one great-grandchild, Cheyanne; and he was a beloved uncle of many nieces and nephews.

James was preceded in death by his parents; his loving wife of 56 years, Marjorie Willis; one son, Jeffrey Wayne Willis who passed away in 2014; five sisters, Mella May Dibben, Stella Ann Sheek, Jewell Marie Clopp, Freda Berniece Tucker and one infant sister Ruby Dell Willis.

*Celebration of Life*

**PRIVATE FAMILY SERVICE**

Friday, May 1, 2020

Freeman Chapel

Jefferson City, Missouri

The Reverend Dr. Monte Shinkle

**GRAVESIDE SERVICES**

WITH MILITARY HONORS

Riverview Cemetery

Jefferson City, Missouri

**ORDER OF SERVICE**

Prelude

Music.....“When We All Get To Heaven/I’ll Fly Away”

Greeting and Invitation to Worship

Scripture

Obituary

Music.....“10,000 Reasons”

Message

Prayer

Benediction

Music.....“When They Ring Those Golden Bells”

Postlude

**MUSICIANS**

Earl Owens, Marty Stangl, Jim Nichols, and Terry Nichols

**SCRIPTURE READER**

James Matthew Willis

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me  
all the days of my life: and I will dwell  
in the house of the Lord for ever.

PSALM 23:6 (KJV)

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only  
begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him  
should not perish, but have everlasting life.

JOHN 3:16 (KJV)

**DAD**

HE NEVER LOOKS FOR PRAISES  
HE’S NEVER ONE TO BOAST  
HE JUST GOES ON QUIETLY WORKING  
FOR THOSE HE LOVES THE MOST

HIS DREAMS ARE SELDOM SPOKEN  
HIS WANTS ARE VERY FEW  
AND MOST OF THE TIME HIS WORRIES  
WILL GO UNSPOKEN TOO

HE’S THERE... A FIRM FOUNDATION  
THROUGH ALL OUR STORMS OF LIFE  
A STURDY HAND TO HOLD TO  
IN TIMES OF STRESS AND STRIFE

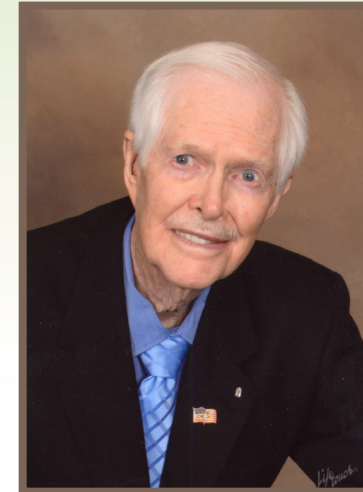
A TRUE FRIEND WE CAN TURN TO  
WHEN TIMES ARE GOOD OR BAD  
ONE OF OUR GREATEST BLESSINGS,  
THE MAN THAT WE CALL DAD.

*In Appreciation*

All of James’s family wants to express their sincere  
appreciation for the many comforting thoughts and  
prayers, floral tributes, food and acts of kindness  
extended to each of them during this time.



*Celebrating the Life of*  
**JAMES E. WILLIS**



Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord,  
and whose hope the Lord is.

JEREMIAH 17:7 (KJV)

