



Smiley Rex Wilbanks

June 9, 1935 - September 29, 2025

Smiley Rex Wilbanks, a devoted husband, father, grandfather, great-grandfather, and friend, passed away peacefully at home on September 29, 2025, at the age of 90. Known simply as “Rex” to many and “Pop” to most, he lived a life marked by kindness, humor, strength, and an unmistakable, sweet laughter that brightened every room he entered.

Rex was born on June 9, 1935, to the late Smiley G. and Pearl Smith Wilbanks. He grew up in the Blue Ridge community of South Carolina, and as one of eleven children - he was surrounded by the love and lessons of a large family. From an early age, he carried with him a zest for life - before joining the military, he was a regular at the Greer Jaycee Dragstrip, where he often came away a champion.

In 1960, Rex married the love of his life, Joyce Ann O’Kelly Wilbanks. Together, they built a marriage that lasted 65 years, filled with laughter, partnership, and devotion. They raised four children – Sherri Stokes (Mickey), Mitzi Moore (Gregg), Craig Wilbanks (Monty Kehl), and Kelli Wilbanks – and eventually welcomed six grandchildren and two great-grandsons into their family. Rex was the proud Pop of Josh Moore (Brittany), Bethani Bachman, Jenna Lafever (Mark), Brooke Bachman, Rylan and Ashlan Hardin, and the great-grandfather of Jackson and Harrison Moore.

Rex was preceded in death by one brother, Lecil Wilbanks, and six sisters: Katherine Hill, Connie Nelson, Rownie Caldwell, Frances Langley, Emily Southern, and Marcelle Lynn Sloan. He is survived by three sisters: Bobbie

Tucker (Ronnie), Louise Few, and Brenda Collins (John).

Rex proudly served his country for 22 years in the United States Air Force, with assignments that took him and his family around the world. His service included tours in Japan, New Delhi, India, Lajes AFB in the Azores, Portugal, and several stateside posts. His years in the military instilled in him a deep sense of duty, discipline, and pride in his country.

After completing his military service, Rex continued to work as a systems programmer for several companies including Greenville County Schools, Reeves Brothers, and Synalloy.

Faith was central to Rex's life. He was a dedicated member of Washington Baptist Church, where he served faithfully as a deacon, chairman of the building and grounds committee, a member of the host and hostess committee, and a member of the Ronnie Knight Sunday school class. Prior to that, he was member of Camp Creek Baptist Church where he also served in a number of roles. He also gave back to his community serving 12-years as a member of the Lake Cunningham Fire Department Commission.

Rex's hands were never idle. He was a natural "fix-it" man, whether it was a car, a computer, or anything in between. He found joy in gardening and was especially known for growing and making the best boiled peanuts around. He loved music, road trips with his family, and could often be spotted in his well-worn Members Only jacket with a pair of aviators tucked neatly into his t-shirt pocket.

Above all, Rex will be remembered for the way he loved his family and cared for those around him. His steady presence, gentle humor, and quiet strength will be deeply missed.

Visitation will be held on Thursday, October 2, 2025, from 6:00-8:00 p.m. at The Wood Mortuary.

Funeral services will be held on Friday, October 3, 2025, at 2:00 p.m. at The Wood Mortuary. Burial will follow in Wood Memorial Park.

Honorary escort will be the Ronnie Knight Sunday School Class of Washington Baptist Church.

Memorials may be made to the Kingdom Vision Fund at Washington Baptist Church, 3500 N. Highway 14, Greer, South Carolina 29651.

The family is grateful for the outpouring of love and support, and for all who called Rex their friend. His legacy lives on in the laughter, kindness, and love he shared so freely.

The family is at the home.

Online condolences may be made at www.thewoodmortuary.com.

Cemetery Details

Wood Memorial Park

863 Gap Creek Road
Duncan, SC 29334

Previous Events

Visitation

OCT 2. 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM (ET)

The Wood Mortuary, Inc.
300 West Poinsett Street
Greer, SC 29650
(864) 877-3351
woodmortuary@bellsouth.net

Service

OCT 3. 2:00 PM (ET)

The Wood Mortuary Chapel
300 West Poinsett Street
Greer, SC 29650
(864) 877-3351
woodmortuary@bellsouth.net

Tribute Wall



“ *The Wood Mortuary created a Webcast in memory of Smiley Rex Wilbanks*



The Wood Mortuary - October 03, 2025 at 10:34 AM

MC

*This was a lovely service for Rex Wilbanks!
I remember those Greer Drag Racing days!
We know now that he is in Heaven with no more suffering, and pain.
May, God give Ann, and family peace during this difficult time.
Marlene D. Cureton*

Marlene Cureton - October 03, 2025 at 06:45 PM

DJ

“ *Celebrating the life of Mr. Wilbanks. Over the course of his life, imagine all the folks he inspired along the way. Rest in Peace.*

Doug & Janet - October 05, 2025 at 12:17 PM

MC

“ *Marlene Dill Cureton lit a candle in memory of Smiley Wilbanks*



Marlene Dill Cureton - October 04, 2025 at 06:55 PM

MD

“ We will be so missed by so many of us. You were so loved. What a legacy for such an incredible man. You loved the Lord, your family and always shared the love to everyone. Praying for comfort and strength to MaAnn and the family. So blessed to have loved and been loved by you. Heaven’s gates opened for you. RIP Pop.

Mike and Debbie - October 03, 2025 at 01:50 PM



“ Large Basket Garden was purchased for the family of Smiley Rex Wilbanks.



October 02, 2025 at 11:02 AM

MW

“ My dad Jack served with Rex in the Azores in the early 1970s and they soon became the best of friends, as did Ann and my mother Carole. Our families adopted each other as their own and remained close all these years. I remember with fondness and love the many talks Rex and I had over the years. He was truly one of a kind. To Ann, Sherri, Mitzi, Craig, Kelli, and their extended families I offer my love and prayers.

Mike Westbrook - October 02, 2025 at 04:54 AM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Smiley Rex Wilbanks.

October 01, 2025 at 04:54 PM



“ *Enchanted Cottage was purchased for the family of Smiley Rex Wilbanks.*



October 01, 2025 at 04:54 PM



“ *Sincerely, The Woodlands at Furman purchased the Enchanted Cottage for the family of Smiley Rex Wilbanks.*



Sincerely, The Woodlands at Furman - October 01, 2025 at 11:28 AM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Smiley Rex Wilbanks.*



October 01, 2025 at 08:42 AM



“ *Steve, Kim, Brad and Jasmyne purchased the Sympathy Gift Vintage Wind Chime - "I Have You In My Heart" for the family of Smiley Rex Wilbanks.*



Steve, Kim, Brad and Jasmyne - September 30, 2025 at 07:28 PM

CC

“ I remember when Rex and Anne worked at the Wednesday night suppers pouring and fixing the drinks. He was always laughing. I bet he was a hoot to work with while he was in the military. I have very fond memories of them and I will be praying for the family.

Charlene Campbell - September 30, 2025 at 06:45 PM

TB

“ I will forever be grateful for the time on this earth that I was blessed to spend with Rex “Pop” Wilbanks. He taught me so much about so many different things that had a tangible impact & effect on my life. His love was genuine, & unconditional. He always wanted to know how I was doing, or if I needed anything. He cared deeply for others... especially his family. I loved him, & he will be missed. The wonderful news is that I will get to see him again, & spend eternity with him in our heavenly home! I know that Pop is enjoying Gods presence there now after hearing “Well done good & faithful servant”! My prayer & support goes out to ALL of the immediate & extended family. Love each one of you. ❤️🙏

Timothy Bachman - September 30, 2025 at 04:35 PM

LJ

“ Love your Jamaican Jewels. planted a Memorial Tree in honor of Smiley Rex Wilbanks.

Love your Jamaican Jewels. - September 30, 2025 at 04:30 PM



“ *Love your Jamaican Jewels. purchased the Simpl
y Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Smiley
Rex Wilbanks.*



Love your Jamaican Jewels. - September 30, 2025 at 04:30
PM