



Wilbur Lawrence Ferguson

October 4, 1922 - February 15, 2016

Wilbur Lawrence (Bill) Ferguson passed away quietly at home on the evening of February 15, 2016, in Mobile, Alabama.

He was born in Birmingham, Alabama, on October 4, 1922 to Mary Edna and Henry John Ferguson. He grew up there, attending West End High School, where he met his future wife, Elinor Ruth Rockett Ferguson, in history class. World War 2 intervened before they married, and in 1940 he enlisted in the Marine Corps. He was assigned to duty on the aircraft carrier USS Hornet, and was en route to the Pacific when the Pearl Harbor attack occurred. He was stationed out of Hawaii, and proud of his ship, which he enjoyed telling his family, was known as the 'Shangri-la' as they would hide their position from the Japanese by overnight cruises between Pacific islands. He was a Marine guard assigned to Lieutenant Colonel James Doolittle, and he fondly recalled the ship's captain telling him to "get that man anything he wants" and Bill often described him as 'a fine gentleman.' He was witness to the take-off of the famous raid on Tokyo made by Doolittle and his bombers. He recalled Doolittle's insistence on taking the first plane, which had the shortest runway, and described holding his breath as the plane went far below the ship's deck, before it pulled up and successfully took off. It was a part of history he was very proud to have been part of.

He saw action in multiple sea battles, including the battle of Midway, serving as an artillery gunner. He was seriously injured in the battle of the Santa Cruz islands, where the Hornet was sunk. He returned to the US mainland where

he served the remainder of the war. During that time, he returned on leave to Alabama, and married his wartime sweetheart, Elinor, on New Year's Eve, 1943. A year later, they had a daughter, Linda Dee Ferguson.

After the war, he settled with them in Birmingham, where he went to work for South Central Bell, first as a telephone line installer, and quickly worked his way into management. A son, Robert Lawrence Ferguson, was born in 1952. They lived in Birmingham, and then in Sheffield, where he served as president of the Kiwanis club, board member of the Chamber of Commerce, and received the keys to the city. They returned to Birmingham, then in the 1970s, with their children grown, Bill and Elinor moved out to Chelsea, Alabama and cleared land, building a small farm, to raise cattle and horses, and take in 5 teenage foster children. They remained in close contact with two of them, whom they love dearly, Chris LaFerriere and Victor Smith.

After taking early retirement from South Central Bell after 34 years, Bill and Elinor moved to Bon Secour, Alabama in the early 1980s. Bill taught himself how to make furniture, and furnished his children's houses and many others, with beautiful hardwood furniture. He traveled across the United States, first to New York with his daughter Linda, where she met her husband Charles, and then with his grandchildren, Jennifer Gray Cole and Jeremy Prescott Gray, driving out west, to Chicago, and to the mountains of North Carolina. He and Elinor attended Grace Fellowship PCA Presbyterian Church, where he helped found the church, and built much of the church's furniture, including the pulpit. He served as a ruling elder for many years, before he and Elinor moved into a retirement home in Mobile 3 years prior to his death, to be closer to his family. He is predeceased by his parents, a brother, Henry Ferguson, and a sister, Emelda. He is survived by his wife of 72 years, Elinor Ruth Rockett Ferguson, his daughter, Linda Dee Ferguson Gray (Charles) of Mobile, his son, Robert Lawrence Ferguson, of Mobile, his grandchildren Jennifer Gray Cole (Jason) of Mobile, and Jeremy Prescott Gray (Holly) of Niceville, Florida. He is also survived by 6 great-grand children: Thomas, Ian and Caroline Gray, and Jacob, Joshua and Juliette Cole. And he is survived by Charlotte Ferguson

Foley, his younger sister (of Montevallo, Alabama), and three other siblings. A military service was held, with Marine honor guard and 21 gun salute at graveside, and he was laid to rest Thursday, February 18, 2016 at 2 pm at Pine Rest Cemetery in Foley Alabama.

Donations may be sent in his memory to:
Grace Fellowship PCA Presbyterian Church,
1740 South Juniper Street, Foley, AL 36535.

Previous Events

Visitation

FEB 18. 12:00 PM - 2:00 PM (CT)

Pine Rest Funeral Home
16541 U.S. 98
Post Office Box 328
Foley, AL 36535
(251) 943-5667
info@pinerestfuneralhome.com
<http://www.pinerestfuneralhome.com>

Service

FEB 18. 2:00 PM (CT)

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Tribute Wall



“ *Wilbur Lawrence Ferguson*

October 04, 2023 at 01:12 PM



“ *Wilbur Lawrence Ferguson*

November 08, 2022 at 06:34 PM



“ *Hervey H. purchased the Sentiments of Serenity Spray for the family of Wilbur Lawrence Ferguson.*



Hervey H. - February 17, 2016 at 04:35 PM