



Jack R. Willis

November 2, 1930 - November 24, 2018

Jack Raymond Willis, 88, of Ponchatoula, LA, died, November 24, 2018, at home with his beloved high school sweetheart and wife of 65 years and daughters at his side. Jack was born on November 2, 1930, in Topeka, Kansas, the son of Raymond H. Willis and Marion F. Knight Willis. Growing up in Paola and Newton, Kansas, Jack graduated from the University of Kansas in 1953 and was commissioned an officer in the United States Navy. He retired in 1973 with the rank of Lieutenant Commander having served primarily on submarines. After the Navy, Jack stayed tied to boats as master of a passenger schooner, tugboat mate, safety officer for the world's largest fleet of pogy boats and an instructor of navigation and seamanship for professional mariners, a job he was tickled to perform into his 80s.

Jack was a gifted communicator whether it be through his writing, teaching, story-telling, poetry, jokes or yarns. He loved to create and build, crafting pieces – both useful and artistic – from leather, wood, rope, canvas, old buckets, cigar boxes and other common items. A self-taught musician who spent hours playing his fiddle, banjo and assorted other instruments, Jack entertained his grandchildren and all who happened to be in earshot of his pickin' and strummin'. He developed a passion for the cowboy life along the way and joined several cattle drives in Kansas and Utah, composing cowboy poems and collecting an assortment of cowboy hats and other appropriate gear, some of which he fashioned himself. He enjoyed animals and kept a variety of critters well fed off the deck of his home in Ponchatoula. A stickler for using the right words in every situation, Jack had a broad vocabulary which he used weekly to complete the Sunday New York Times crossword puzzle - in ink. He rejected the use of GPS devices, preferring roadmaps and common sense to navigate his journeys. And, of course, he never felt fully dressed without a handkerchief in his back pocket and a pocket knife in the front. Jack Willis lived an accomplished, acoustic, analog life respected for his good character, admired for his creativity and cherished for the way he loved his wife.

Jack was preceded in death by his two sons, Mark and Scott, and daughter-in-law, Grace Key Willis. He is survived by his wife, Emma (Sandy) Willis; daughters, Lisa Willis and Michelle (Steve) Wilson; daughter-in-law, Anna (Joseph) Wilkinson; grandchildren, Jordan (Jason) Haulbrook, Vaughn Willis, Rachel (Josh) Hurt, Emma (Josh) Mais, Jonathan

Wilson, Michael Wilson, Ben Willis and Abby Willis; and, great-grandchildren, Brayden Haulbrook, Amelia Willis and Vaughn Willis.

A Celebration of Life Service will be held Saturday, December 1st, at 1 p.m. at the Brandon G. Thompson Funeral Home, 1190 Highway 51 North, Ponchatoula, LA, 70454, followed by a reception in the Magnolia Room. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the Best Friends Animal Society (bestfriends.org), 5001 Angel Canyon Road, Kanab, UT 84741.

Comments



“ It was areal pleasure to have Jack work with us in the pogeey business. He knew how to handle every marine issue and the people involved. His light hearted nature has been missed by all that worked with him over the many years before his retirement from the fishing business. We will fondly remember Jack.

Ed & Becky Swindell - November 29, 2018 at 10:11 PM



“ We were fortunate to have been coworkers with this amazing man and treasure the times spent together to enjoy as friends. Our deepest condolences to Sandy and all the family. Bob and Sandra Jenkins

Sandra Jenkins - November 29, 2018 at 08:40 PM