



Jerry Paul Willett

September 24, 1948 - March 23, 2026

IN MEMORY OF:

Jerry Paul Willett

Serving Location:

CRAIN PLEASANT GROVE-MURDALE FUNERAL HOME

31 Memorial Drive, Murphysboro, Illinois

Jerry (don't you dare call him by his given name of Gerald if you'd like to keep him from haunting you) Paul Willett, age 77, of Murphysboro, entered into eternal life on Monday, March 23, 2026. He was surrounded by his family and the dearest of friends who gathered together to hope and to pray, to weep uncontrollably and to laugh out loud in memory of his shenanigans.

He left this world the same way he lived it every single day, surrounded by love, in the company of dear friends, bringing people together, and wearing no underwear.

Jerry was born on September 24, 1948 to James and Ila Mae (Foster) Willett in Henderson, Kentucky, where it has been told he was a wild holy terror of a boy who jumped trains like a hobo, didn't meet a rule he could keep and was

terrified of nuns and rulers (probably for good reason) - he knew no boundaries to getting out and living life and had a rip roaring good time doing it.

Jerry served in the United States Army with the honor and the distinction of being part of the Green Berets and received many medals of honor from Vietnam. He tried to die there multiple times but it didn't take (praise the Lord) and he came to know peace about that time of his life through the support of a wonderful group of veteran men whom he truly cherished every moment of his time with.

Jerry was very involved with the Murphysboro Elks Lodge #572 and was so proud to be a part of it. He wasn't so fond of the days when it was his turn to make the hamburger patties, but he loved the people and the wonderful things the Elks did for the community, but mostly he loved his briefcase.

He spent his career in exploration as a coal drilling supervisor and foreman at Consol Coal Company, Burning Star 4, and left that career with friendships and bonds that would last a lifetime. After retirement he needed more than smothering his wife with attention to keep himself occupied, so he worked his first retirement job in maintenance at St. Joseph Hospital where he made many friends, and as was typical of Jerry, left a big impression. For a brief time he drove the medical transport van and had such a great time doing it – the ladies just wouldn't leave him alone though and kept making up ailments to get to the doctor when he was the driver, and since he didn't want to be the reason ladies were feeling so sick, he decided it was time for something new.

Jerry was an avid fisherman, BBQ master, gun expert, deer hunter and aiming to be a professional golfer as his third retirement job for Jackson County Country Club. He was very much looking forward to working for the club as a golf course marshal this season, so if you find yourself there, raise a toast to

Jerry! He would have absolutely loved being of service. And whoever it is that only pays for three players and then goes to the car to get the 4th – he was on to you.

Survivors include his beloved wife, Barbara; his son Paul and daughter in-law Amy Willett, daughter Ami (Hendricks) and son in-law Anthony Grimes, daughter Jaime Hendricks and son in-law David Marks, son Adam Hendricks, his beloved granddaughter, Hayden Marks in whom his love and pride ran so deep for there are simply no words that could ever express it, and daughter and granddaughter by friendship and love for them, Alison and Taylor Hankins; brother, John (Becky) Willett; and sister-in-law, Darlene Willett.

He is preceded in death by his parents and one brother, Danny Willett.

A Family Hosted Celebration of Life will be held at the Murphysboro Elks Lodge on Thursday, April 16th starting at 4pm with a Jerry worthy good time to follow.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests with gratitude that memorial contributions may be made to the Murphysboro Elks Lodge #572 and to Wright Way Rescue in honor of his dear sweet puppy Coco who he loved beyond measure and who healed his heart after the loss of his sweet Mia pup.

God Speed our dear sweet and wonderful Jerry.

"Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Romans 5:1

Our hearts are heavy but our faith is strong.

The cremation of Jerry Paul Willett will be personally handled by the staff of Crain Funeral Home.

Crain Pleasant Grove-Murdale Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements.

Previous Events

Family Hosted Celebration of Life

APR **16**. 4:00 PM - 6:00 PM (cst)

Murphysboro Elks Lodge #572
1809 Shomaker Dr.
Murphysboro, IL 62966

Tribute Wall

JA

“ *Jacey purchased the Arrive in Style for the family of Jerry Paul Willett.*



Jacey - April 16 at 09:22 AM

WS

“ *With love, Mary Jane and Dave Snyder purchased the Medium Dish Garden for the family of Jerry Paul Willett.*



With love, Mary Jane and Dave Snyder - March 29 at 02:39 PM

JC

“ *Barb I am so sorry for your loss! Sending prayers for you and your family. I know what you are going through as I lost Paul on the 9th of this month. Just keep your faith and know that they are in a better place and one day we will be together again. Love you my friend!*

Judith Civello - March 27 at 09:34 AM

KA

I am sorry hear about your loss husband

Katherine - March 27 at 05:44 PM

SN

“ I got to know Jerry while he was working at St Joseph. I truly was a mess. A fun mess.
Enjoyed him greatly, friendly, and a good man. Rip Jerry
To Barbie and family Peace be with you 🙏🕊️

Suzie Porter Naegele - March 27 at 12:33 AM

BF

“ We didn't get to spend as much time with Jerry as we would have liked but Jerry was a special person that never once failed to make me smile when in his presence. We will miss him.

Bryan Ferguson - March 26 at 07:15 PM

JB

“ I will miss seeing Jerry at my music gig. Whenever he was in Florida I could count on him being there for the music. RIP OLD FRIEND.
Bradford prayers to Jerry all the families.

J.R. Bradford - March 26 at 05:20 PM

BG

“ My time with Jerry was always something I truly valued. He had a way of making every moment feel special, and he always made me feel genuinely welcomed and appreciated. I'll remember his warmth and kindness fondly.

*My heartfelt condolences go out to his family and all who loved him.
He will be deeply missed.*

-Brian

Brian Garvey - March 26 at 03:13 PM

JT

There are too many years for me to remember being with Jerry, he was like a brother, from working together, and watching are sons grow up together. I will always remember him an will miss him. God rest in heaven peace!

James Taylor - March 26 at 05:05 PM

LS

He was a classmate at Holy Name High School. I was new as a freshman and he was always so nice and made me laugh. Haven't seen him in years but kept up on Facebook the past few years. He loves his wife and family. Bless all his family and friends.

Linda M Sutton - March 26 at 07:36 PM

GG

Jerry and I were the same age and we grew up together So many good memories. He has several of us cousins living here in Henderson. He also has a younger brother John that lives here too. We all love and miss him!!!

Gale Melton Grossman - March 27 at 12:29 PM

MK

so sorry to hear about Jerry's passing. He was a fantastic, funny and great person. Had the same birthday. I know he will be missed. Mary Kortkamp

Mary Kortkamp - April 04 at 04:19 PM