



## Wilford "Wil" Noel Duke

November 13, 1926 - October 4, 2022

Wilford "Wil" Noel Duke, whose big broad smile and booming greeting readily revealed an even bigger heart, died peacefully Tuesday, Oct. 4 surrounded by family at his hospital bedside. He was 95.

A devoted, loving husband and father, accomplished executive, and faithful Christian who lived a model life, Mr. Duke was born Nov. 13, 1926, the son of Jackson "Jack" and Jewel (nee King) Duke of Burkburnett, TX.

A middle child with two older brothers and a younger brother and sister, his mother died when he was 6 and his father, a tenant farmer and later a gasoline station owner/operator, raised the family of five through the Depression. Mr. Duke excelled in academics and sports in school and like many of his generation enlisted in the Navy upon graduation to enter World War II. He entered Japan as part of the occupation forces as the war ended. Some 70 years later, he had the privilege, along with other veterans, of taking an Honor Flight to Washington, D.C. After discharge from the service, Mr. Duke enrolled at North Texas State Teachers College, now the University of North Texas in Denton, TX where he graduated with a degree in accounting.

In 1949 Mr. Duke began a nearly 42-year career with Southwestern Bell Telephone Corp., now AT&T. He retired in 1990 as comptroller of the company. He was known throughout Southwestern Bell for his high standards,

integrity, service, excellence, and the way he treated fellow employees with appreciation and encouragement to help them grow and excel. “If Wil Duke has signed it, you can bet your SBC stock that it meets all legal, professional, and code of business conduct tests,” was the sentiment expressed at his retirement. “And it will also have met his own additional personal checks for truthfulness, fairness, and righteousness.”

He was a 60-year member of Kirkwood Baptist Church where he served as a deacon, helped begin a mission church, helped start and fund a food pantry ministry to serve Bosnian refugees fleeing their war-torn country in the 1990s, and provided leadership, energy, time, and financial support to countless other ministries of the church. After retirement, he took on more, serving as a volunteer at Missouri Baptist Hospital.

He excelled in tennis, competing on his college team at North Texas and playing for decades after college in local tournaments and at SBC events. Shelves at his home filled with trophies spoke to his prowess on the tennis court. Later in life he took up golf. To his delight (and admittedly surprise) he made a hole-in-one on a golf course in California. He played a tough hand of bridge and the Texas domino game 42 and enjoyed puzzles, brain teasers, riddles, and Sudoku. With his wife and most often with friends as well, he traveled extensively throughout the United States and visited six of the world's continents.

He doted on his family and cherished his wife of 74 years, Emma Louise Duke. His warmth, kindness, and generous spirit touched and enriched everyone in his life but especially his family who were so blessed by him.

In addition to his wife, Emma Louise Duke of Town and Country, MO, Mr. Duke is survived by his son, Kerry (Becky) Duke of Fort Thomas, KY; daughter, Denise (Jerry) Driscoll of Creve Coeur, MO; daughter-in-law, Joan

Brumleve of Redwood City, CA; sister, Betty Burk of Windom, TX; grandchildren, Kelly (Matthew) Bryant of Wenonah, NJ; Erin (Ryan) McArdel of Kent, WA; Kevin (Jessica) Duke of Fort Thomas, KY; Brian Duke of Denver, CO; Lesly Duke, Marco Duke, and Juan Duke, all of Redwood City, CA; Wil Driscoll of St. Louis, MO; Emily (Darian) Puga of O'Fallon, MO; Tyler Driscoll of Oakland, CA; and 11 great-grandchildren.

In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his son, Gregory "Greg" Mark Duke; and brothers, Norman Cicero Duke, Charles Vernon Duke, and Raymond Leon Duke.

Services will be at 10 a.m. Monday, Oct. 17 at Kirkwood Baptist Church, 211 N. Woodlawn Ave., Kirkwood, MO 63122 with burial and graveside services at Bellerive Gardens Cemetery in Creve Coeur, MO. A luncheon will follow at the church.

Visitation will be from 1 p.m. until 4 p.m., Sunday, Oct. 16 at Bopp Chapel Funeral Directors, 10610 Manchester Road, Kirkwood, MO 63122.

Memorials are suggested to Kirkwood Baptist Church, 211 N. Woodlawn Ave., Kirkwood, Missouri 63122 general fund or designated to the church's Bosnian Ministry Food Pantry.

# Cemetery Details

## Bellerive Gardens Cemetery

740 North Mason Road  
St. Louis, MO 63141  
(314) 434-3933  
info@bellerivegardens.com  
<https://bellerivegardens.com>

# Previous Events

## Visitation

OCT 16. 1:00 PM - 4:00 PM (CT)

Bopp Chapel  
10610 Manchester Road  
Kirkwood, MO 63122

## Service

OCT 17. 10:00 AM (CT)

Kirkwood Baptist Church  
211 N. Woodlawn Avenue  
Kirkwood, MO 63122