



# William Kenneth Burke

September 10, 1935 - June 13, 2020

William Kenneth Burke

Major, US Army, Retired

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Born in Cheneyville, LA, he grew up on a cotton farm on Yellow Bayou outside of Simmesport, Louisiana. He was the second oldest of 4 boys.

He regularly attended the Baptist church in town with his family. Dad attended church all his life and served in various capacities from committee member to Deacon. With other families he helped establish a Baptist church while stationed in Baumholder, Germany and even supplied in the pulpit occasionally. One of his favorite passages was the Lord's Prayer, a prayer he had reason to recite often in the heat of battle.

He hunted and fished, and played the guitar a little, when he wasn't working on the farm picking cotton and working the fields. There was always work to be done on the farm. He played basketball in high school and during his military career. His high school team regularly played small college teams for lack of other high school teams. His teams played for a La. State Championship. He excelled in volleyball as well, and as a member of the 4th Infantry champions, his team was invited to try out for the Olympics. He was a decent bowler, and in track and field, he did well in the high jump.

He attended Simmesport High School under the tutelage of great educators like Mrs. Emma, Mr. Kermit, and Mrs. Hazel Barr; teachers who prepared him well for his careers as a decorated military Officer and later as a Computer Programmer/Analyst.

He enrolled in Louisiana College in the Fall of 1953, but never finished the semester. He left school to join the Army at age 18, and as an enlisted man, served with the 508th Air Borne Regimental Combat Team, Mortar Battery, while stationed in Japan. Later, he

attended Officer Candidates School and was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant. He took his family with him when he was posted to Germany, serving at Baumholder and Wiesbaden. He was in Germany during the Cuban Missile Crisis, and his battery was chosen to fire the 24-hour salute for President John F. Kennedy after his assassination. Upon returning from Europe, he was stationed at Ft. Campbell, Kentucky, and Fort Sill, Oklahoma. During these years, he deployed to Viet Nam twice. He was there in the Central Highlands during the Tet Offensive. On his second deployment, he acted as an advisor to the Army of Viet Nam to help them increase their artillery accuracy, upkeep and efficiency. His military awards and citations include two Bronze Stars, two Air Medals, and three Army Commendations Medals, one for valor in the face of the enemy. During his career he was cited many times for his efficiency, forethought and problem-solving ability. His final active duty assignment was as the regular Army advisor to the only National Guard Airborne Artillery unit in the U.S. in Port Arthur, Texas. He retired with distinction after 20 years as a Major in the 101st Airborne Artillery Division.

After retirement from the military, he worked with EDS and other various companies in the capacity of data processing manager.

He was wise enough not to talk much about other girlfriends, but sometime during High School a smart red headed beauty caught his attention and on December 12, 1954 he married Clara Rogerie Whitmore. He was a 19 yr old Army Private. She was only 17 and still a senior in High School. For better or worse, richer or poorer, in sickness and in health, they were married for nearly 65 years. They had two children: Michael Shawn Burke and Kathy Ann (Burke) Henson.

Dad could be difficult and often was. He never shied away from a "spirited debate" no matter the topic. He is the only person I know who argued with the Encyclopedia Britannica. He lived a difficult life but, like so many of his generation, never talked much about the challenges he faced and never used them as an excuse. Even though he didn't always know how to show it, he took his responsibilities to his family very seriously, and whatever other issues he may have had, his family never suffered for want of what was needed. He spent nearly 13 years as a resident of the Missouri State Veterans' Home in Warrensburg, MO where he received the most outstanding and compassionate care. The staff called him Papa, and he became a favorite. He told everyone he saw that he loved them. As Alzheimer's gradually stole his memory, it also erased the haunting night terrors and images of war and replaced them with contentment, and we are grateful for that small favor. He passed away peacefully in his sleep.

Bill was preceded in death by his wife, Clara R. Burke, parents Webster and Lucy Burke,

and brothers Donald Burke, Col. USAF, Ret, and Edward Burke. He is survived by his brother Charles Burke, son Michael and daughter in law Laura Burke, daughter Kathy and son in law Kerry Henson. Grandchildren include Shawn Phillip Burke, Patrick Joel Burke, Aaron Michael Burke, William Alan Henson, and Emily Grace Pinkley, and Rachel Burke. Great-grandchildren include Audrey Mae Burke, Ziggy Wayne Burke, Ava Adams, and Maddox Adams.

In lieu of flowers memorials may be made to the Missouri State Veterans Home "Student Scholarship Fund", 1300 Veterans Rd, Warrensburg, MO 64093, (660) 543-5064 or to the Alzheimer's Association at <https://alz.org/>. If you donate in Bill's name please advise our family so we can thank you personally.

# Cemetery

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**DFW National Cemetery**  
2000 Mountain Creek Pkwy  
Dallas, TX, 75211

# Events

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<b>JUN</b>	<b>Graveside Service</b>	<b>01:30PM - 02:00PM</b>
<b>19</b>	<hr/>	
	DFW National Cemetery	
	2000 Mountain Creek Pkwy, Dallas, TX, US, 75211	

# Comments

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“ Loved his never failing appetite for good Cajun food and never gaining an ounce. Always a gentleman and loved to laugh.  
Lane Whitmore Coco. Sister-in-law.

**Lane Coco** - June 26 at 01:13 PM



“ A special man who always saw the glass half-full when I was around him! He was easy to talk to and always had a ready laugh which I enjoyed! We will see this good man! He is home!

**Charlie Cruce** - June 27 at 10:34 PM



“ I remember camping when all we had to eat was hog liver,yellow hammer and rice. What a meal. Not the squirrel gravy we had planned.Rain, Misery and cold!!!

**cecil** - June 30 at 11:44 AM