



John Lowell Wilson, Jr.

January 17, 1933 - March 6, 2026

John Lowell Wilson, Jr., age 93, passed away peacefully on March 6, 2026, in Hot Springs, Arkansas, surrounded by love. Never one to pass up a corny pun, he probably told Peter at the pearly gates how much he was dying to get in and see his beloved Norma.

Known as John to some and Lowell to others, he was born January 17, 1933, in Checotah, Oklahoma, to J.L. Wilson, Sr. and Jeffie Lea Sasnett Wilson. Lowell liked to say he was “born at a very young age” because he arrived slightly premature.

Lowell grew up during the Depression in a home rich in faith, family values, and backyard gardening, if not always in money. His parents were educators who instilled in him a lifelong commitment to the Golden Rule and to church. Academics never thrilled him, but friendship and mechanical tinkering certainly did. Alongside lifelong partners in crime Paul Day and Harold Robinson, Lowell spent his youth playing marbles, hunting, gigging frogs, rebuilding engines, and occasionally engineering questionable experiments. One particularly memorable project involved modifying a car so it could be steered while the driver lay hidden on the floorboard much to the confusion of anyone watching a seemingly driverless vehicle cruise down the street. Lowell’s talent for fixing things led him to a machine shop job at Tinker Air Force Base in Midwest City, Oklahoma. There he met Lola Leavelle, who decided he ought to meet her red-haired daughter, Norma. Lowell quickly agreed. After spotting Norma working on roller skates at a drive-in burger

joint, he asked her out and found the love of his life.

A surprise greeting from the Army draft board on his nineteenth birthday sent Lowell straight to the Navy recruiting office. After boot camp, he and Norma married on May 4, 1953, beginning a marriage that lasted seventy-two and a half years. The Navy promptly sent the newlyweds to San Diego and gave Lowell a long cruise aboard the USS Princeton as a wedding present. During that time their first daughter, Carol, arrived in March 1954.

After his honorable discharge, Lowell attended the University of Oklahoma on the G.I. Bill, proudly becoming a lifelong Sooner. He earned a degree in Vocational Machine Shop and Industrial Arts in 1960 and began teaching high school machine shop. In 1963, the family welcomed daughter Linda.

John later moved into industry, becoming Director of Research and Development for a ring manufacturing company and helping develop Siladium, a metal used in class rings. His career took the family between Oklahoma and Texas several times, including a stretch running a machine shop with childhood friend Paul Day. Wherever he lived, two things remained constant: family and church.

Eventually Austin, Texas became home for more than three decades. There, the family grew again as daughters Carol and Linda met the loves of their lives. Soon Norma and John gained their favorite titles, Emmy and Papa, when grandchildren Laura, Greg, and Kimberly arrived. It was during this time that Papa became proficient at making his famous chocolate peanut clusters as well as cinnamon toast on Sundays before taking a visiting grandkid to church.

Lowell loved teaching, building, fixing, and showing others how to use tools. In his house, hiring a repairman simply wasn't an option. If something broke, Lowell fixed it and probably taught a grandchild along the way.

Though quiet and gentle by nature, Lowell had a well-developed appreciation for corny jokes, practical pranks, and mysterious family sayings that made little sense to outsiders but meant everything to those who loved him: "Brother Morris," "Bill Grogan's goat," "Scott me a biscuit," and the legendary "Tommy

Sneaker.”

In 2017, Lowell and Norma built their dream home in Carlisle, Arkansas. In 2023, they moved to Mount Carmel to be closer to family. After Norma passed away on October 22, 2025, Lowell often said simply, “I miss my Emmy.” His heart followed hers 135 days later.

Lowell was preceded in death by his parents, his beloved Norma, and brothers-in-law Henry Pride, James York, and Royce Leavelle, Jr.

He is survived by his daughters Carol Wilson (Sandy York) and Linda Chambers (Barry); grandchildren Laura Chambers (Clay Waliski), Greg Chambers (Brittany), and Kimberly Moseley (Broc); great-grandchildren Miles Chambers, Emilia Chambers, and Rory Moseley; his sister Dorothy York; sister-in-law Martha Leavelle; and many nieces, nephews, cousins, and dear friends.

Services will be held Thursday, March 19, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. at the Fort Gibson National Cemetery in Fort Gibson, Oklahoma, with a reception to follow from 1:00–3:00 p.m. at the Fort Gibson Church of Christ. Memorials can be made to: Fisher House Foundation, St Jude’s, Burnt Cabin Christian Camp, or Tipton Children’s Home.

With both tears and smiles, we know John is finally reunited with his Emmy, greeting her with a grin and one more terrible pun and making her sigh “Oh Lowell.”

The family of John Lowell Wilson, Jr. has entrusted his service to Clifford D Garrett Family Funeral Home, Fort Gibson. 918-478-2555.

Online condolences may be left for the family at clifforddgarrettfamilyfh.com

Cemetery Details

Fort Gibson National Cemetery

1423 Cemetery Road
Fort Gibson, OK 74434

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

MAR **19**. 10:00 AM (CT)

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1423 Cemetery Road
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