



## Melvin Gene 'Mel' Howell

October 19, 1948 - July 11, 2024

Melvin Gene Howell, a beloved resident of Fort Gibson, Oklahoma, passed away peacefully on Thursday, July 11, 2024 at his home with his wife and sons by his bedside. Mel was born October 19, 1948 in Erick, Oklahoma, the son of Elmer and Wilma Howell and raised in Sweetwater, Oklahoma, where he graduated High School. He then completed his education at Northeastern State University in Tahlequah, Oklahoma.

Mel enlisted in the United States Army on April 25, 1968, in Oklahoma City, embarking on a remarkable journey of service and dedication. During his time in the Army, Mel displayed immense courage and valor as a field medic for the first platoon of A Company, 1st Battalion, 506th Infantry Regiment of the 101st Airborne Division. He bravely served in the Vietnam War from September 1968 to December 1969, including the infamous battle on Hill 937 lasting from May 10 through May 20 in 1969, also known as Hamburger Hill. Mel's exceptional service earned him numerous accolades, including the Combat Medical Badge, Bronze Star Medal, Air Medal, Vietnam Gallantry Anose with Palm, Vietnam Civil Actions Honor Medal, Army Commendation Medal, Good Conduct Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal with Cluster, Republic of Vietnam Campaign Ribbon with Unit Citation, Presidential Unit Emblem, Meritorious Unit Emblem, Valorous Unit Embalm, Expert Badge with M-16 and Sharpshooter Badge with M-14 reflecting his unwavering commitment to his fellow soldiers and his country.

Mel understood the true cost of freedom, and he paid that price with his

unwavering dedication. Mel fought not only for his own freedom but for the freedom of future generations. He fought to ensure that the values we hold dear; liberty, justice, and equality, would endure. Mel is not just a veteran; he is a symbol of courage, resilience, and unwavering commitment. Mel stood tall against adversity, facing the challenges of war with bravery and honor. He exemplified the values of duty, honor, and sacrifice, and his service will forever be remembered. On November 21, 1979, Mel married the love of his life, Karen Stangle, in Muskogee, Oklahoma. Together, they built a life filled with love, laughter, and shared passions. Mel found his calling as an educator, dedicating 13 years of his life to teaching at Hilldale High School in Muskogee, Oklahoma. As the head of the math department for 10 years, Mel was renowned for his excellence in teaching, earning the prestigious Teacher of the Year award three times. Mel was not just a teacher; he was a beacon of knowledge, a mentor, and a guide. He possessed a unique ability to unlock the potential within each student, nurturing their curiosity, and instilling in them a lifelong love for learning. Mel understood that education was not just about imparting information, but about empowering young minds to reach their full potential. Mel had a passion for teaching that was infectious. He created a classroom environment that was nurturing, inclusive, and filled with a sense of wonder. Mel fostered a love for learning, inspiring his students to explore, question, and discover. He instilled in them the belief that knowledge is power and that education is the key to unlocking a world of possibilities. But Mel's impact extended far beyond the classroom. He was a mentor, a friend, and a source of inspiration to his colleagues. He shared his expertise generously, always striving to elevate the standards of education. Mel understood the importance of collaboration and the power of a supportive community of educators working together to shape the future. He made a lasting impact on his community by sponsoring SADD and participating in the school's talent shows, bringing smiles to all with his energetic performances of ZZ Top cover songs. Beyond his professional achievements, Mel was a man of many interests and talents. He had a passion for music, often playing in a band on

the weekends with Bob Barker playing mandolin and Mike Williams on banjo or recording music with Bryan his younger son. He loved his Datson Custom 280z, and working alongside Paul (his elder son) on old cars, fast cars, and motorcycles. In 1983, Mel began taking annual motorcycle trips with his brother and other buddies. In 1995, Karen became his travel partner and they visited all the states West of the Mississippi except Washington and most of the Southern States. Then, he would like to slow down on the golf course. Mel cherished his friends and family, finding joy in every moment life had to offer. Mel's legacy as a veteran, teacher, friend, father, and husband will continue to inspire all who knew him. His kindness, compassion, and zest for life touched the hearts of many, leaving a profound impact on all who had the privilege of crossing paths with him. Melvin Gene Howell will be dearly missed, but his memory will forever live on in the hearts of those who were fortunate enough to know him.

Mel is preceded in death by his parents.

Mel is survived by his loving wife Karen, of the home; his children, Paul Howell and wife, Lora of Muskogee, OK; Bryan Howell and wife, Alissa of Wagoner, OK; sisters, Jane Bull of Mangum, OK; LeaAnn Carrol and husband, Rod of St. Cloud, FL; and Virginia Swirczynski and husband Kevin of Texas; brother, Butch Howell and wife Patti of Chickasaw, OK; and a host of family and friends who will carry on his spirit of joy, dedication, and love.

Mel's viewing will be Noon-7:00PM on Tuesday, July 16, 2024 at Clifford D Garrett Family Funeral Home in Muskogee.

A celebration of Mel's life will be held 10:30AM Wednesday, July 17, 2024 at Clifford D Garrett Family Funeral Home Chapel, in Muskogee, Oklahoma with his family officiating. Michael Ritchey, Mike Williams, Garrett Howell, Christy Breau, Johnathon Field, and Corbin Stewart will serve as casket bearers.

Honorary casket bearers are Allen Howell, Billy Hill, Larry Garde, Mike Garde, Buster Lenard, Cliff Garrett, Ashley Linton and Dennis Garde.

Committal prayers and interment will follow at Fort Gibson National Cemetery

with full Military Honors being observed.

The family of Melvin Gene Howell has entrusted his care, service and burial to Clifford D Garrett Family Funeral Home and Crematory, Muskogee, OK. 918-910-8883.

Online condolences may be left for Mel's family at [clifforddgarrettfamilyfh.com](http://clifforddgarrettfamilyfh.com)

# Cemetery Details

## Fort Gibson National Cemetery

1423 Cemetery Road  
Fort Gibson, OK 74434

# Previous Events

## Viewing

JUL 16. 12:00 PM - 7:00 PM (CT)

Clifford D Garrett Family Funeral Home and Crematory (Muskogee)  
1020 West Okmulgee Ave  
Muskogee, OK 74401  
(918) 910-8883

## Celebration of Life

JUL 17. 10:30 AM (CT)

Clifford D Garrett Family Funeral Home and Crematory Chapel  
1020 W Okmulgee  
Muskogee, OK 74401

## Committal

JUL 17. 12:30 PM (CT)

Fort Gibson National Cemetery  
1423 Cemetery Road  
Fort Gibson, OK 74434



# Tribute Wall

SA

“ *Mr. Howell was an excellent teacher! I enjoyed learning algebra and trigonometry from him!! I would like to offer my condolences to his family. May his soul rest in peace.*

SANJAY AGGARWAL - August 10, 2024 at 11:06 PM

ES

“ *I met Mel in 2019 when I moved next to him ,, I would visit with him at the gate that connected are yards when he was walking his dog , he always gave my dogs treats ! I really enjoyed his stories about his life !! And listening to his music ! Great Neighbor and friend! So sorry he gone to soon !! Eric smith*

Eric Smith - July 25, 2024 at 01:55 PM



“ *Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Melvin Gene 'Mel' Howell.*



July 16, 2024 at 04:30 PM

BW

“ *Bryan W. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Melvin Gene 'Mel' Howell.*

Bryan W. - July 16, 2024 at 04:30 PM

TD

“ *Mel was a soldier in Vietnam.  
He won a Bronze Star for saving the lives of 2 wounded soldiers,  
which was part of his duties as the platoon medic.  
Sometime later he saved 2 more soldiers and was nominated for a  
Silver Star by his platoon commander.  
He died of cancer induced by exposure to Agent Orange, a  
herbicide used as a way to destroy jungle.  
I spoke with his son yesterday at the funeral of my mother-in-law  
and confirmed this story.*

*Mel was a friend of my wife's brothers, that's how we became  
friends.*

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**Tom Denton** - July 15, 2024 at 09:24 AM

HH

“ *Holly (Parker) Hubbell purchased the Simply Eleg  
ant Spathiphyllum for the family of Melvin Gene  
'Mel' Howell.*



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**Holly (Parker) Hubbell** - July 14, 2024 at 09:48 PM

HH

“ *Holly (Parker) Hubbell planted a <a href="/store/Product.aspx?  
ProductId=4518">Memorial Tree</a> in honor of Melvin Gene 'Mel'  
Howell.*

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**Holly (Parker) Hubbell** - July 14, 2024 at 09:48 PM

JF

“ J.R. and Morgan Field purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Melvin Gene 'Mel' Howell.



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**J.R. and Morgan Field** - July 14, 2024 at 01:17 PM

JF

“ J.R. and Morgan Field planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Melvin Gene 'Mel' Howell.

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**J.R. and Morgan Field** - July 14, 2024 at 01:17 PM

JR

“ I taught next door to Mel for many years at Hilldale. He was a 'salt of the earth' guy that was loved by his students. Many happy memories of him and his guitar.

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**Joyce Rock** - July 13, 2024 at 10:22 AM

JM

Dr. Howell, I am so sorry to learn of your loss. It sounds like he was a very special person, a great patriot and an exceptional teacher. He touched the lives of many people as have you. I know you must have many wonderful memories. God bless you. Judy

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**Judy Ross Moore** - July 14, 2024 at 02:31 PM

RH

“ My memories of my cousin, Melvin, are from the early 1970's when his mom, my Aunt Jean, lived next door to us in California. Melvin was there a lot spending time with my Dad (Red Mansel) hanging out and working on cars. It's been so long since then but Melvin was such a large part of my happy childhood memories! I think of him often. - Renee Mansel Hirschenhofer



Renee Mansel Hirschenhofer - July 12, 2024 at 09:19 PM

RH

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Renee Mansel Hirschenhofer - July 12, 2024 at 07:13 PM

BG

“ It was always such a pleasure to see Mel walk through the door at the barbershop whether it be to get a haircut or just visit and play us a song. He was definitely a credit to the service and we appreciate him very much for that. He was just a super good guy. He will be greatly missed.

Derek and Brenda Gawf

Brenda Gawf - July 12, 2024 at 06:54 PM



“ *Large Basket Garden was purchased for the family of Melvin Gene 'Mel' Howell.*



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July 12, 2024 at 02:58 PM



“ *Martin and Machele Eastham planted a <a href="/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518">Memorial Tree</a> in honor of Melvin Gene 'Mel' Howell.*

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**Martin and Machele Eastham** - July 12, 2024 at 02:58 PM