



William Laon Smith

August 4, 1940 - December 11, 2024

William Laon Smith, 84, of Alexandria, Virginia, passed away peacefully on December 11, 2024. Born on August 4, 1940 to Thelma Lou Utt and William Quarterman Smith in Jerseyville, Illinois, Bill lived a life filled with adventure, love, and service.

Raised on the Mississippi River, Bill's childhood was marked by playing ball with friends and delivering blocks of ice with his brother Bob. His aptitude for baseball and basketball shone at Jerseyville High School and continued at Arkansas State University. Fate intervened at an ASU football game when a pretty classmate from Jonesboro stumbled on the bleacher steps right into his arms. It was the first of many laughs he and Barbara Ann would share. They wed in 1962 and were married for 33 Years.

Bill's 21-year career as an officer in the Army, including service in Vietnam and Germany broadened his worldview. No matter where he was stationed, he often

returned home to Grafton, IL to visit his parents and siblings and remained proud to be “raised on the river.” Retiring as a Colonel, he transitioned to the role of Director of Ethics at General Dynamics. He treasured the friendships formed during both careers.

In retirement, Bill discovered a passion for painting, creating landscapes that now grace the homes of friends and family. He fulfilled his goal of visiting all seven continents, gaining experiences and memories that often inspired his artwork.

As "Pops," Bill delighted in treating his grandchildren to rides in his red convertible, drive-through burger runs and movie nights. He was a constant presence at their sporting events and performances. Time together was his top priority and he generously facilitated family gatherings and epic beach trips. His ability to make everyone feel loved was a hallmark of his character.

Bill is preceded in death by his sister Bette Lou Whyte and beloved wife Barbara Ann Wayland Smith. He is survived by his brother Robert Smith, sister Beth Duncan, children Stacy (Lex) Schul and William Q. (Margot) Smith II, grandchildren Heather (Korey) Leese, Ryan Schul, Will Smith and Charlie Smith, great-grandchildren Eli and Teagan Leese, and many cherished extended family members.

In lieu of flowers, the family suggests donations to SOME (So Others Might Eat), an organization Bill actively supported. Such contributions are greatly appreciated, however floral tributes are also welcome, reflecting Bill's fondness for fresh flowers.

Bill Smith's life was a testament to the power of love, laughter, and embracing life's adventures. He will be deeply missed by all who knew him. A graveside service will be held at Arlington National Cemetery, 1 Memorial Drive, Arlington, VA 22111, on Wednesday, February 19 at 11AM. Followed immediately by a reception at the Army Navy Country Club Arlington, 1700 Army Navy Drive, Arlington, VA 22202.

Cemetery Details

Arlington National Cemetery

1 Memorial Drive
Arlington, VA 22211

Previous Events

Graveside Service

FEB 19. 11:00 AM (ET)

Arlington National Cemetery
1 Memorial Drive
Arlington, VA 22211

Reception

FEB 19. 12:00 PM (ET)

Army Navy Country Club
1700 Army Navy Drive
Arlington, VA 22202

Tribute Wall

PS

“ Bill was one of a kind -- a star ball player in college, a patriot, a respected and successful Army officer and leader, a loving and faithful father and husband, a well respected and effective corporate truth teller -- and a friend. Bill's infectious good humor, enthusiasm and innate honesty inspired all. A truly good man.

*Paul Schwartz
Major General
US Army (ret.)*

Paul Schwartz - January 18, 2025 at 12:14 AM

LR

“ Bill Smith was one of the best clients rand* Construction has ever had. He was fair, professional, polite and fun!

RIP Bill, knowing that your friends and rand truly admired you.
Thank you for believing in us 25 years ago. You were one of a kind.*

Linda Rabbitt and your friends at rand Construction*

Linda Rabbitt - January 17, 2025 at 03:23 PM

DR

“ Bill was a childhood friend, he will be missed. Dicki Rulo

Dicki Rulo - December 17, 2024 at 12:33 PM

FT

“ *RIP Bill.* ”



Frank Titus - December 17, 2024 at 11:57 AM