



## Wilton Joseph "Bill" Norris, Jr.

August 20, 2020

Wilton Joseph "Bill" Norris, Jr.

Abbeville, LA - Wilton Joseph "Bill" Norris Jr. born in Rayne in 1935, a current resident of Abbeville, died at LHC LTAC Lafayette, LA., on August 20, 2020. After 85 years of a memorable life, quoting his friend, "he came in for his final landing."

A private graveside inurnment will be conducted by Fr. Benjamin Pitre, Parochial Vicar of St. Joseph Catholic Church in Rayne. Due to Covid-19 precautions. A memorial service will be scheduled to celebrate Bill's life at a later date.

Bill graduated from St. Joseph Elementary School and Rayne High School. A gifted individual, Bill participated in six-man football, track, and played tenor sax in the high school band. Bill loved music and enjoyed playing his tenor sax. He was a member of a small band consisting of high school classmates who entertained for school dances. Bill studied petroleum engineering at LSU in Baton Rouge while on a football scholarship.

A proud American, Bill chose a 20-year Marine Corps military career. He was initially stationed at NAS Pensacola, FL, where he attended flight schools and received his wings, He was an F4 Jet and helicopter pilot, as well as an aerial

gunnery instructor. Proficient in aerial reconnaissance and aerial photography, Bill completed 120 combat missions over three tours in Vietnam. He received numerous medals and special commendations, and achieving the rank of Major. An astute businessman, Bill's business holdings were diverse and included the well-known Norris Marine. Prior to retirement he was employed at Broussard Brothers in Abbeville.

Bill was an avid golfer, tennis player, fisherman, hunter, wood worker, and family man. While stationed at NAS Pensacola, he caught the first billfish on The Miracle Mile and 30 subsequent billfish that season on his boat, "The Billfisher". A true sportsman, Bill never missed a hunting season at his camp on Pecan Island, where he often entertained friends, family, and taught his grandchildren and many of the young hunters his expert duck calling skills.

Bill always said he had been given more opportunities in life than most people could ever imagine. He was always incredibly grateful for his full life and all of his many opportunities.

Above all, he was an adoring and loving husband to Emma, and incredible father to his son and stepchildren. Poppa's indomitable spirit and joie de vivre were evident in the special relationship he built with each of his grandchildren, giving each a carefully chosen moniker to mark their unique characteristics. They were his life.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Wilton J Norris, Sr. and Lilly Prejean Norris, a brother, Sigmund Norris, his paternal grandparents, Ovey and Elita Hulin Norris, his maternal grandparents, Alphe and Leona Larcade Prejean, his Godparents and aunt and uncle, Aubrey and Helen Prejean Leger, and his first wife and mother of his son, Jane McNeil.

He leaves to cherish his memory his loving and devoted wife of 46 years,

Emma Gardiner Norris. He also leaves his son, Wilton J. "Chip" Norris III, and wife Julie Norris, of Mountain Home, AR; stepson, Andre L. Fremaux and wife Fran Lauve Fremaux of Baton Rouge, LA; two stepdaughters, Emma Claire Fremaux Rees of Pensacola FL, Dr. Nicole Fremaux Keehn and husband, Dr. Gordon Keehn of Dallas, TX, and Dr George C Rees of Pensacola, FL. He is also survived by his grandchildren Wilton J. "Wil" Norris IV and wife Tilda of Mountain, AR, Lauren J. Norris Morgan and husband Braden of Japan, Charles Dodge Rees of Shreveport, Madeline A. Rees of New Orleans, Cameron B. Keehn of Dallas, Caroline C. Keehn of Dallas, Camille L. Fremaux of Baton Rouge, Charles L. Fremaux of Baton Rouge and his very beloved great- grandchild, Audrey Morgan of Japan. Nieces and nephews, Lisa Norris Gammons of Crowley, Angie Norris Barcia of Baton Rouge, Debra Norris Roy of Baton Rouge, Jaime Gardiner Henderson of Crowley, Todd Gardiner and wife Shawne of Crowley, Tisha Gardiner Collado and husband Mike of Lafayette, Jody Gardiner Hammes and husband Terry of Lafayette, Jarrod Gardiner and wife Kecia of Mire. His beloved hunting dog, Max and his support dog, Gucci.

The family extends our heartfelt gratitude to Dr Jon Leleux, devoted friend and hunting buddy, for the special care and kindness he has given Bill throughout the years as his physician. And to Dr Dana DiCherry for the empathetic guidance and vigilant care she provided Bill in his final years.

In Lieu of flowers the family asks that donations be made in the name of Major Wilton J. "Bill" Norris, Jr. to St Jude's Children Hospital, 501 St Jude Place, Memphis, TN 38105/ [donors@stjude.org](mailto:donors@stjude.org) or The Semper Fi Fund, 825 College Blvd, Suite 102 PMB 609, Oceanside, CA 92057/ [semperfund.org](http://semperfund.org)

Friends may view the obituary and guestbook online at [www.gossenfuneralho](http://www.gossenfuneralho)

me.net.

Arrangements have been entrusted to Gossen Funeral Home, Inc. of Rayne, LA, (337) 334-3141.

Gossen Funeral Home, Inc.

# Tribute Wall

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“ *Bill and I grew up only one block from each other. Our parents were really close friends. I have pictures of us on horseback. On Sunday's our parents rode to the country on horseback . Luther would bring us by truck. Luther would bar-b-que. I had not seen Bill in many years. My sympathy to Emma and the rest of his family. His expiring has brought back a lot of memories.*

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**Clara Ann Lalande Avant** - August 22, 2020 at 10:54 AM