



Willie James Turner

May 27, 2025

Willie James Turner was born on April 14, 1931, in Mangham, Richland Parish, Louisiana, the beloved baby boy of Hattie B. Chapman and Hence Turner. He was the youngest of six children—Louberta, Lula, Geneva, Robert, Mary Elisa, and son Darryl Wayne Lumpkins—all of whom preceded him in death.

At a young age, Willie struck out on his own, arriving in New Orleans around the age of 13 or 14. Though limited in formal education, he proved himself a conqueror in every sense of the word. A self-taught mechanic, a certified CDL truck driver, and—without question—the world's best lima bean and sweet potato chef, Willie was a man of many talents.

It was in New Orleans that he met his wife and companion, Gwen. Their union, built on love, was an alliance that lasted over 63 years. Together, they created a home and a beautiful family.

For many years, Willie drove Mardi Gras floats, bringing the magic and spirit of Carnival not just to the city, but into the hearts of his family. A true country boy at heart and a devoted fan of country music, he could drive from New Orleans to Florida listening to one eight-track tape by Charley Pride. Yes, "The Snakes Crawl at Night" was his song.

Willie had a special charm. He was sweet, persuasive, and uniquely himself. So persuasive that every Valentine's Day, he somehow convinced his kids that the holiday was really on February 15th, presenting them with gifts and cards on that day every year—proof of the special way he saw the world.

A master of Spades, he would confidently bid four with a ten-hand. A lawn care perfectionist and a mechanical whisperer, he could diagnose car or lawn mower problems just by sound. Willie often said that if he'd had an education, he would've been Barack Obama—and we believed him.

Wise, compassionate, confident, and always humble, our daddy was a kind and hardworking man. He proved that with perseverance and faith; success is within reach.

He lived through history—born during the Great Depression, witnessing three wars, marching for civil rights, watching the moon landing, enduring Hurricane Katrina, voting for the first Black president, and surviving the COVID-19 pandemic. His life was nothing short of remarkable.

Willie T. is survived by his loving wife Gwen and their three children: Dwyn (Melvin), Wendy (Jerome), and Winston. He also leaves behind four grandchildren—Terry Dunn, Jerome Steib II, Dwyn Steib, Javen Turner, and one great-grandchild, Jordyn Steib. His Extended family includes a bonus son, Zeric Dunn (Brandy), along with a host of relatives, in-laws, nieces, nephews, and dear friends.

Willie Turner's life was a testament to strength, humor, love, and resilience. He will be deeply missed and forever celebrated.

A Celebration of Life for Willie James Turner will be held at D.W. Rhodes Funeral Home, 3933 Washington Avenue, New Orleans, La 70125 on Friday, May 30, 2025 at 10:00 am. Visitation will begin at 9:00 am. Interment: Mount Olivet Cemetery, 4000 Norman Mayer, Ave New Orleans, 70122. Please visit <https://premiermemories.net/users/MTYxMjgwLVdpcGxpZQ==/home.html> to sign the online guestbook, share memories and condolences with the family.

Arrangements entrusted to D.W. Rhodes Funeral Home, 3933 Washington Avenue, New Orleans, LA (504) 822-7162 www.rhodesfuneral.com.

Cemetery Details

Mt. Olivet Cemetery

4000 Norman Mayer Blvd.
New Orleans, LA 70122

Previous Events

Visitation

MAY 30. 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM (CT)

Rhodes Funeral Home - Washington Avenue
3933 Washington Avenue
New Orleans, LA 70125
(504) 822-7162
<https://www.rhodesfuneral.com>

Funeral Service

MAY 30. 10:00 AM (CT)

Rhodes Funeral Home - Washington Avenue
3933 Washington Avenue
New Orleans, LA 70125
(504) 822-7162
<https://www.rhodesfuneral.com>

Tribute Wall

JK

“ I knew Willie back in the late 50's. He drove trucks for J.L. Kolb Drayage hauling huge loads. He also drove trucks for the truck parades at Mardi Gras. I knew him mostly for the Kolb Boat Racing team. He would help in driving to and from race sites and also help however need on the river or lake banks. He was always a gentleman. Gwen, I will never forget your standing up at my husband, Sonny's funeral to express your love for the Kolb family. I even have it recorded. I also posted a picture of Willie at the races in the late 50's. May he rest in peace. Jane Kolb

Jane Kolb - May 30, 2025 at 11:51 AM

DW

Thank you so much for the picture.

Dwyn - June 17, 2025 at 04:27 PM

JK

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Jane Kolb - May 30, 2025 at 11:37 AM



“ Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Willie James Turner.



May 29, 2025 at 06:04 PM

FE

“ *From Children of Mary Eliza purchased the Strength & Solace Spray for the family of Willie James Turner.*



From Children of Mary Eliza - May 29, 2025 at 11:40 AM