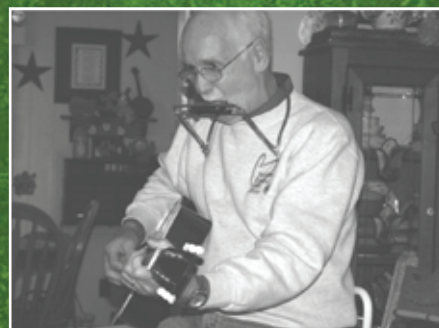
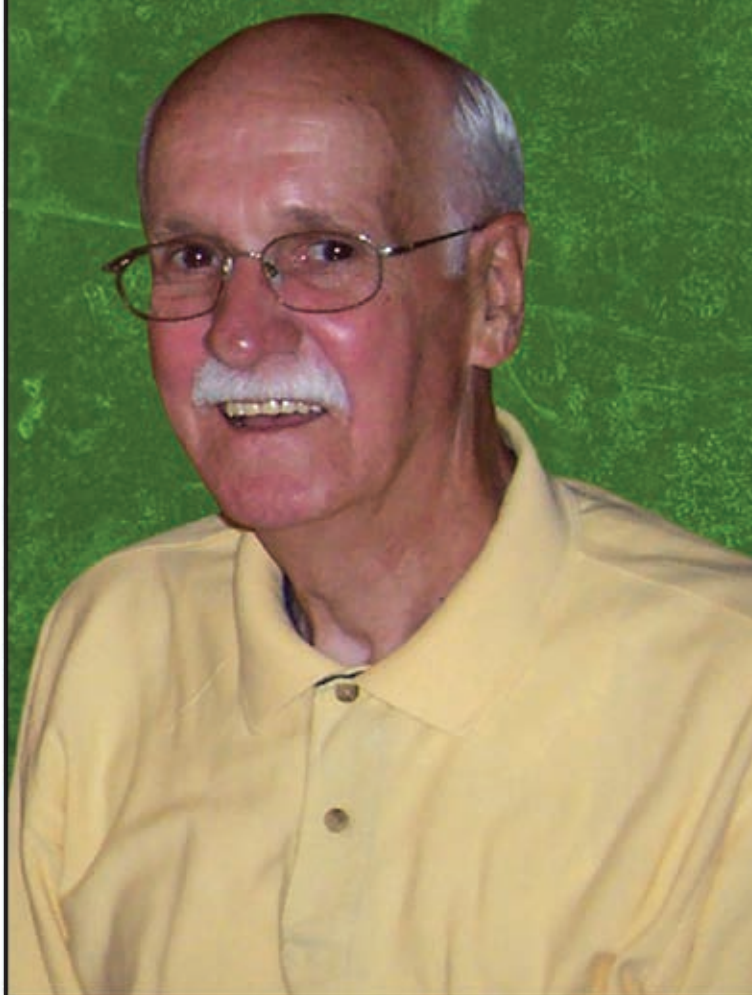


Donald Bilbee

May 4, 1939 - October 2, 2016



Don's Life Story

With a life that spanned times of war and times of peace, times of plenty and times of want, Don Bilbee was a blessing to everyone he met. He was the sort of man who would do anything for anyone, and as a lifelong resident of the community he loved he was the sort of man whom everyone seemed to know. With faith as a cornerstone in his life, Don exemplified what it means to be the hands and feet of his Lord and Savior. Married to the love of his life, he was thrilled beyond measure to witness his family tree blossom to include numerous branches of loved ones who made him so very proud. Deeply loved, he will be forever missed.

The 1930s were some of the most trying days we have faced as a nation as the entire decade was cloaked in the hardship of the Great Depression. Jobs were hard to find, the unemployment rate soared, and things went from bad to worse when a drought covered our nation's heartland for nearly two years, adding strain to an already crippled agricultural industry. Despite the challenges around them, Howard Branson and Alma Irene (Lloyd) Bilbee were able to shift their focus to an exciting time in their own lives as they were eagerly awaiting the birth of their new baby as the beauty of May unfolded in the city of Marion, Indiana. The big day finally arrived when the baby boy they named Donald Duane drew his first breath on Thursday, May 4th. He was one of six children in his family as he was raised alongside his siblings, Jerry, Judy, Dale, Jasper, and Roy.

In many ways Don was a young boy of his generation who experienced a fairly typical upbringing. Tragedy struck in the Bilbee family when Don's father died at a young age. Although he had been attending local schools, Don had to leave school to get a job so that he could care for his mother after the death of his father.

Not to be forgotten during his years as a young man was Don's introduction to the girl of his dreams. Her name was Katherine Guinn, and they became high school sweethearts. With a desire to spend the rest of their lives together Don and Katherine were united in marriage on June 24, 1959, in Marion, Indiana. This marked the beginning of a new chapter in a love story that would span more than 57 years. Don and his wife exemplified what marriage is truly intended to be as they were





soul mates, true companions, and best friends. Together they welcomed three children including Nancy, Michael, and Jennifer into their hearts and home. To support his family, Don worked hard at Universal Electric in Marion and Kendallville, and he went on to retire from GIS in Fort Wayne. In addition, he owned rental houses in the area, which also kept him quite busy. Don often met Mike for breakfast on Saturday mornings and was off to work on the rentals once they were finished.



Throughout his life Don was a bustle of activity. He was such a smart man who learned everything he knew through hard work and a determination to succeed. Don was a music lover who taught himself to play the banjo, mouth harp, harmonica, and guitar, and he especially loved bluegrass. He loved the Apple Festival in Kendallville, and for years he participated as "Uncle Don" and "Dancin' Don." He was a member of First Christian Church in Kendallville and a Cub Scout leader for a time. Don enjoyed golf, loved his Volkswagens, and could be found reading every day, usually nonfiction of some kind as he was an expert on Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War. Don even made up his own words like "Bilbeeisms" as well as sayings such as, "you're full of canal water." As his family and friends can attest, he knew so many different things. Don made hand tone rings for his banjos, which gave them a more precise sound and drew the attention of anyone who was familiar with the instrument.

There was never anything of greater value in Don's life than his faith. His soul was saved by the grace of God after the 1965 Palm Sunday tornado in Marion that nearly killed his wife and family. From that day forward Don was a changed man, and he loved the Lord with everything that he was.

Second only to his faith was Don's loved ones. He was thrilled to become a grandfather, and he was an active part of his grandchildren's lives. They always had fun together including the times they went out for bike rides. Don had mounted a seat on the front of his bike, or his "wisbang" as he called it, and he rode around with his grandkids riding right there. Don also taught his grandchildren to fish, to play the banjo, and even to drive. Of course he always had chocolate for them, too.

Kind, tenderhearted, and selfless, Donald Bilbee enriched the lives of everyone around him. He was a self-made man with wisdom beyond his years and success that was a result of his hard work and determination. As



much as he was willing to work hard, Don also took the time to enjoy life, often with his loved ones by his side. Life will never be the same without him here, but he leaves behind a timeless collection of memories this his loved ones will forever treasure.



Donald Duane Bilbee, of Kendallville, peacefully joined his Savior and his daughter, Nancy, in heaven on Sunday October 2, 2016, at Parkview Noble Hospital. Don's family includes his wife, Katherine Bilbee of Kendallville; his son, Michael (Tina) Bilbee of Kendallville; daughter, Jennifer (Tony) Schneider of Kendallville; six grandchildren: Heather



Newcomer of Kendallville; Donnie (Addie) Newcomer of Columbus, Georgia; Tyler (Jessica) Bilbee of Kendallville; Abbie Bilbee of Kendallville; Cody Schneider of Kendallville, and Emily Schneider of Kendallville; ten great-grandchildren; brother, Jerry (Bobbi) Bilbee of Marion. Don was preceded in death by his daughter, Nancy Lynn Newcomer (2011); sister, Judy Clark; and three brothers, Dale Bilbee, Jasper Bilbee and Roy Bilbee. Funeral services for Don will be held on Thursday, October 6, 2016, at 2:00 p.m. at Hite Funeral Home in Kendallville with David Newcomer officiating. Visitation will take place before the funeral on Thursday from 11:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. at the funeral home. Burial will follow services at Lake View Cemetery in Kendallville. Memorial donations may be made to Parkview Noble Hospice. Send a condolence to the family at www.hitefuneralhome.com. Arrangements entrusted to Hite Funeral Home of Kendallville.



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