



William Nelson

June 10, 1942 - December 24, 2025

William Fred “Willie” Nelson, of Chicago IL passed away peacefully on Christmas Eve at the age of 83 with his longtime partner Joanne Mineo at his side. Willie was born on June 10, 1942 in Pittsburgh, PA to Ruth and Tom Nelson, the second of their four children. He maintained close relationships with his parents and siblings throughout their lives.

In May 1960, like his father and brother, Willie enlisted in the United States Navy where he served with honor as an Electronics Technician until May 1966. Over the ensuing years he held many different jobs from photographer at a large advertising firm in Chicago to bartender at The Nightcap. In the years before retirement, he worked as a driver for a funeral home. His quiet, gentle demeanor was well suited to assisting the bereaved. His presence now would be a great comfort.

Willie met Joanne in the early 1980s. Their memorable first date at Chez Paul, where literally everybody working in the restaurant knew Willie, ultimately led the happy couple to formalize their commitment to one another by purchasing a home together on the “coveted middle block of the middle street” of Edgewater Glen. Over the past 40 years they formed deep friendships with many of their neighbors. Some will remember Willie for having any tool or piece of hardware they could possibly need for a home repair and for his willingness to help them make the repair. Of course, this exposed them to his

somewhat annoying habit of encouraging them to do some part of the job themselves so they would learn and feel more comfortable doing the work themselves in the future. He will also be remembered for his food — his deviled eggs, his low and slow cooked baby back ribs with his South Carolina-style barbecue sauce, and his key lime pies.

A review of Willie's life would be incomplete without mention of his lifelong passion for motorcycling, his sweet golf swing, and his love for his home-away-from home, Destin Florida, where he and Joanne enjoyed countless Gulf-front vacations including several recent winter escapes. Willie was intelligent, kind and funny, an avid reader and lover of puzzles. He was a storyteller, a World War II history buff and a teacher at heart; a person prone to oft-repeated favorite phrases and expressions. There are currently no less than three separate lists of "Willie-isms" being compiled by various friends and family members. He would find this endeavor performed in his memory to be "entirely adequate."

Willie's passing leaves a deep hole that can't be filled. He was loved by many and will be greatly missed. He is survived by his devoted partner Joanne, his much-loved brother Tom (Elaine) Nelson, his nieces Laura (Dave) Ritchey and Jennifer LaCompte, and his nephew, Timothy Nelson. He was preceded in death by his parents, his sisters Ellen Williamson and Barbara (Earl) Triebes and his nephew Christopher Triebes.

Willie will be laid to rest at Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery in Elwood, IL with full military honors on Friday, January 2, 2026 at 12:00 pm.

In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation to Fisher House Foundation www.fisherhouse.org or the Greater Chicago Food Depository www.chicagofoodbank.org

Cemetery Details

Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery

20953 W Hoff Road
Elwood, IL 60421

Previous Events

Graveside Service

JAN 2. 12:00 PM (CT)

Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery
20953 W Hoff Road
Elwood, IL 60421

Meeting at cemetery no later than 11:55 AM. We are lead from the entrance to a roadside shelter at noon.

Tribute Wall

CE

“ John and I met Joanne and her beloved Willie Nelson in Destin many years ago.
Willie was a kind, smart and very witty guy who John and I enjoyed visiting with.
Joanne, Willie was so loved by you and by many. He will be missed here at DGG.....I promise we will have a toast in his honor (and your dear friend Carol's as well). May Willie rest in peace. We are here for you and are sending you hugs and prayers during this very difficult time.
Grief is the price of someone so loved. Thinking of you during your time of grief.

Christine Brown Elston - January 06 at 07:07 PM

JK

“ Dear Joanne
I missed you on the golf course in Destin in November but knew you were home with Willie, where you needed to be.
I never met Willie but the stories that have been shared tell me I would have liked him very much.
Please take care of yourself and cherish your memories.
Jackie Kavanagh (Canadian member of Indian Bayou ladies' golf group).

Jackie Kavanagh - December 31, 2025 at 07:43 AM

BS

“ Joanne, I'm so sorry to hear this (via John A). I have found memories of you and Willie as well as John's rear neighbor "Bill the cop" when I lived on Thorndale. I left behind many great friends and acquaintances when I moved back to DC. I had no idea of Willie's amazing background and life outside of the 'hood.

Brian Steinbach - December 30, 2025 at 03:50 PM

JA

“ *Willie was my next door neighbor. My kids (Megan and Kevin) grew up with Willie in their lives. He attended all of their birthday parties. He built their backyard swing set with 6"X6" timbers set in cement. The swing set will remain in the backyard of 1425 forever.*

I was fishing years ago in Wisconsin with Willie and our neighbor friend Bill Diaz. Bill was fishing from the front of the boat, and Willie was fishing from the rear. I was in the middle of the boat between Willie and Bill physically and philosophically. Bill was competitive about fishing and was on a mission to catch fish. Willie was fishing with one of my lures that he and I both knew was not going to catch a fish. Willie did not believe in zoos. He loved animals, and he did not care about catching a fish. Willie was happy just enjoying being on a lovely lake with good friends and simply casting.

Willie was kind, intelligent, and had a marvelous sense of humor. He will be missed by all who knew him.

My favorite Willie witticism: "It is what it is."

John Albrecht

john albrecht - December 30, 2025 at 10:00 AM