

William Leon Priester

William Leon Priester, 82, of Ehrhardt, South Carolina passed away Friday morning, August 15, 2014, at his residence after an extended illness.

He was the son of the late Lucille Shuler Cherry Priester of Ellore and the late George William Priester of Bamberg. As a young boy, he was raised in the home of Mrs. Lucy Kinard. She was a wonderful person who had a great influence upon his life.

Mr. Priester grew up in the Clear Pond Community of Bamberg County and attended the public schools of Ehrhardt. He was a 1950 graduate of Ehrhardt High School. After working on the family farm with his father and brother, he entered Clemson Agriculture and Military College in September, 1951. While at Clemson, he was a member of the dairy judging team which he thoroughly enjoyed. He spoke often about this experience with very fond memories. **He received a B.S. degree in Agriculture and Dairy Science from Clemson in January of 1956.**

Immediately after graduation, Mr. Priester enlisted in the United States Army, stationed at Fort Carson, Colorado. He married Jeannie Elizabeth Martin on August 4, 1957. They moved to Alabama where he was stationed at Fort Rucker.

In 1958, Mr. Priester began his life long career with the South Carolina Army National Guard. He was a member of the 163rd Support Battalion of the 218th Heavy Separate Brigade. He worked in the 218th Brigade Property Book Office in Hampton, S.C. traveling all across the state visiting armories. During his career, he received numerous awards and honors related to his service for the Guard. He retired in August, 1989 with the rank of Chief Warrant Officer 4.

For over 60 years, Mr. Priester was a member of Ehrhardt Baptist Church. He loved his church and served in many capacities. These included being a member and teacher of the Adult Sunday School class, choir and fellowship committee member, pitcher of the men's softball team, Sunday School Superintendent, and Deacon. In 2002, he was awarded Deacon Emeritus. He attended church each week and served the Lord faithfully until his health began to decline.

Other areas of service included the Ehrhardt Lions Club and Ehrhardt Fire Department. From the inception of the town's annual Schuetzenfest festival, Mr. Priester volunteered in any areas asked of him. He most enjoyed being parade announcer. He served in this capacity from the festival's start in 1976 until several years ago. The outdoors was another love of Mr. Priester's. An avid fisherman, he enjoyed the beautiful lowcountry rivers. After retirement, he could usually be found there every week. Gardening was another favorite hobby. Each summer brought an abundance of vegetables which he generously shared with his family and friends of the community.

Mr. Priester is survived by his wife of 57 years; his five children: Mr. and Mrs. Rusty (Paula) Ulmer of Irmo, Mr. and Mrs. Michael (Myra) Crosby of Ruffin, Mr. and Mrs. Robert (Janice) Wrightenberry of Bamberg, Mr. and Mrs. William Leon (Julie) Priester, Jr. (Bill) of Bamberg, Mr. and Mrs. Leo (Lynda) Warren of Williams; ten grandchildren, Ryan Ulmer of Seneca, Blake Ulmer of Irmo, Mr. and Mrs. Alton (Ashlyn Crosby) Smith of Varnville, Jeremy Crosby of Ruffin, Mr. and Dr. Will (Anna Marie Wrightenberry)Evans of Williams, Rob Wrightenberry of Bamberg, Amber Priester and Will Priester of Bamberg, Caroline Warren and Connor Warren of Williams; and two great-grandchildren, Luke Smith of Varnville and Kayleigh Ulmer of Irmo. He is also survived by his brother, Mr. Marion Cherry of Ellore. He was pre-deceased by his parents, two brothers, George Allen Priester of Bamberg, Fred Cherry of Columbia, and one sister, Eddie Lou Cherry Ott of Ellore. Funeral services were conducted 3 o'clock Sunday afternoon, August 18, 2014, from Ehrhardt Baptist Church, 427 Allen Street, Ehrhardt. Interment with military honors followed in Ehrhardt Cemetery, Mount Pleasant Church Road, Ehrhardt. Pallbearers were his six grandsons: Ryan Ulmer, Blake Ulmer, Jeremy Crosby, Rob Wrightenberry, Will Priester and Connor Warren. Honorary Pallbearers were Mr. Daniel Chassereau, Mr. Donald Hiers, Mr. Bennie Hughes, Mr. Carlisle Kinard, Mr. Lavern Kinard, Mr. Hallman Sease and Mr. Roger Smith. The family would like to thank Mrs. Karen Williams for all of her love, care and support along with the members of Grove Park Hospice, especially Jacque Shuler and Leslie McCormick.