



Ralph Ervin Gilliam

July 18, 1946 - August 23, 2023

Ralph Ervin Gilliam, 77, of Catoosa, Oklahoma, passed away on August 23, 2023, at Porta Caeli House in Tulsa, Oklahoma. He was born on July 18, 1946 in Melvin, Kentucky to Morris Gilliam and Grace Newsome. He was then raised by Lawrence and Cleo Gilliam who loved him as their own child.

The family eventually moved to Kansas City, Missouri, where he was raised. Ralph attended Center High School in the Kansas City School District. After High School he served in the United States Army, training as a mechanic serving his Country in Vietnam. After receiving an honorable discharge, he joined the Mo-Kan Ironworkers Local No 10 and worked in the Kansas City area for 12 years.

Ralph moved to Tulsa during 1982 to work on the BOK Tower. He soon met Linda and they married in 1983. They eventually settled in Zephyrhills, Florida in 1986. He put his military training in mechanics to good use for their future business endeavor repairing and selling golf carts. They opened Little Wheels Golf Carts, Inc. in Zephyrhills, Florida. Where they prospered for the next 17 years.

He loved tinkering with motorcycles, welding, and building motorcycle trike conversions. He also found a love of raising Emus, Rheas and Ostriches in his spare time. People in Zephyrhills would come by their property just to see the birds. He was proud to show them around the pens and would give everyone a lesson on Emu raising. The local Newspaper deemed him "The Bird Man", which led to teachers asking for tours for their students

occasionally and many other visitors.

Together Ralph and Linda became active members of the GWRRA. His wife Linda was elected President of the local GWRRA chapter, which in turn allowed him to head activities, weekly rides, meetings and planning of the annual Christmas Rally for years. Together they covered a lot of miles on their Goldwing trike. They rode from Florida to Nova Scotia, Canada, to the Midwest and back in one summer. They loved riding to rallies all over the country. But they enjoyed a month-long camping trip with other members in Cherokee, North Carolina every year the most. The couple discovered their love for the Blue Ridge Mountains. Eventually settling on a mountain side property in Hot Springs, North Carolina for their retirement in 2004. Ralph and Linda's declining health prompted them to relocate from their mountain home to their son's home in Catoosa, Oklahoma in 2020. Where they have enjoyed several years with their Children, Grandchildren and Great-Grandchildren. Preceding him in death are his parents Morris Gilliam, Grace Newsome Branham, Lawrence Gilliam and Cleo Gilliam. Surviving are his wife Linda (Delashaw Varano) Gilliam of Catoosa, stepdaughter, Debbie Varano Hudson (Ron) of Hulbert, stepson, Joseph Anthony "Tony" Varano Jr. of Catoosa, numerous grandchildren and great-grandchildren in Oklahoma and Florida. His two children with his first wife, Shari Gilliam, daughter, Brandi Kathleen Gilliam of Nevada, Missouri, son, Trent Alexander Gilliam of Harrisonville, Missouri and grandson, Alexander Brian Linthicum of Moberly, Missouri and half-brother, Terry Branham of Wheelwright, Kentucky.

Memorial Service and Military Honors will be held on September 1, 2023, at 3:00 p.m. Located at God's Amazing Grace Church, 407 S. Cherokee Street, Catoosa, Oklahoma 74015. Please join the family for dinner afterwards.

Graciously provided by the Church.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to Porta Caeli House at www.portacaeli.org

Previous Events

Military Honors

SEP 1. 3:00 PM (CT)

God's Amazing Grace Church
407 S Cherokee St
Catoosa, OK 74015

Tribute Wall



“ *Country Basket Blooms was purchased for the family of Ralph Ervin Gilliam.*



August 30, 2023 at 05:08 PM



“ *Praying that you have sight of a magnificent mountain stream with a gentle current to soothe your soul.
Thankful for every moment with you Dad.
All my love,
Brandi*



Brandi Gilliam - August 25, 2023 at 04:04 PM