

WILLARD WELLS

Our caring, thoughtful, and present husband, father, grandfather, and friend, passed away peacefully on Friday, December 13, 2024, at the age of 84. Born in the small town of Caro, Michigan, Willard grew up with his sister, Martelle, and their widowed mother, Iva, forging a bond of resilience and love that shaped his life.

Willard, an English major at the University of Michigan and Central Michigan University, had a lifelong love of reading and learning. Shortly after graduating from college, he married his college sweetheart, Margaret Waggoner. Together, he and Margaret traveled the Alaska Highway to begin their life together in Fairbanks, where he served with distinction in the Army Signal Corps at Fort Wainwright.

Following military service, Willard entered the corporate world, beginning a long and successful career with Alcoa. Known for his strong work ethic and dedication, Willard was always the first to arrive at the office—long before dawn—but always came whistling down the Lane toward home by 5:00 p.m. to have dinner with his family.

Willard was a longtime member and elder at Southminster Presbyterian Church, where he spearheaded the revival of the annual Thanksgiving dinner, inspired by memories of church dinners from his youth. This event and the fall family retreat weekends he organized became lasting traditions, regularly filling Southminster's Fellowship Hall and the Windy Ridge Retreat Center with warmth, laughter, and community spirit.

A devoted father and sports enthusiast, Willard enjoyed coaching his sons' Little League teams, playing ball with his boys in the street or shooting hoops in the driveway. Together, they cheered for the Detroit Tigers and Lions, and later for their adopted Pirates, Steelers, and Penguins. Willard also shared his love of literature with his sons, regularly reading aloud to them. A cherished tradition was reading his favorite book from childhood, *The Story of a Bad Boy*, to each of his boys during their 4th-grade year.

In retirement, Willard embraced his passion for lifelong learning, taking over 100 courses on topics ranging from American history to art and film in the company of his good friends through the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute. Willard could often be found deep in conversation with the coffee group gang, discussing subjects from history and world politics to the prevailing currents in the Indian Ocean.

Willard and Margaret shared a love for the arts, attending theater performances, concerts, and visiting museums in Pittsburgh and wherever their travels took them. They also enjoyed the many hours spent in the company of their beloved family, including their sons Steve (Jennifer), Matt (Amy) and Nicholas (Cheng-Hsia), and their six grandchildren: Stephen, Meghan, and Ally, the children of Steve and Jenny, and Sara, Sophie, and Molly, the daughters of Matt and Amy.

Willard is survived by his wife of 59 years, Margaret Wells; their three sons, Stephen, Matthew, and Nicholas; and his grandchildren.

The family extends its heartfelt gratitude to the compassionate caregivers at Sunrise Senior Living, where Willard spent his final months, to the caregivers of Commonwealth Hospice who ensured his comfort in his final days, to the lifesaving caregiver support provided to Margaret by Dementia 360 and to the friends and neighbors who supported Margaret in the most difficult days of her steadfast care of Willard. We are ever grateful for our extended caregiver community.

Willard's legacy of kindness, love of learning, and his unwavering commitment to work and professional accomplishment will live on in the lives of all who knew him. His example of faith, family, friends, and hard work serves as a lasting reminder of what it means to live a life of purpose.

Private burial in Penn Forest Natural Burial Park, Verona. A celebration of Willard's life will be held on Saturday, January 25, 2025, at 11:00 a.m. at Southminster Presbyterian Church in Mount Lebanon. In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made to Dementia 360 Presbyterian SeniorCare Foundation, 1215 Hulton Road, Oakmont, PA 15139, <https://www.givetosrcare.org/donate-now/> or Southminster Presbyterian Church, 799 Washington Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15228. Arrangements by **NATURAL FUNERAL COMPANY**, www.naturalfuneralcompany.com

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