

## Obituaries



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### Wilbur L. Thornton

NOVEMBER 28TH 2015 BY DEE LOFLIN

Wilbur L. Thornton

**Wilbur L. Thornton** was ushered with prayer to his forever home Friday, November 27, 2015 by family and friends who surrounded him at his home of 18 years in Poplar Bluff, Missouri.

A Malden, Missouri native, Wilbur lived a life of service. While residing and raising a family in Malden, he contributed in numerous ways to that community, serving on the Malden School Board for 16 years, the Civil Air Patrol, Volunteer Fire Department, Auxiliary Police, and as an EMT for Dunklin County.

He was also an avid weather watcher, basketball referee, and church deacon. His 50+ years with the United States Postal Service began in Malden as a 19 year old mail carrier. He was Postmaster there until transferring to Poplar Bluff in the 1990's.

Wilbur left just as big of an impression in Poplar Bluff. He served as Postmaster there until being promoted to Manager of Postal Operations for the Southeast Missouri Region, overseeing 180 post offices. But his name may be most recognized as "The Voice of the Raiders" for his 24 years of broadcasting Three Rivers Raiders basketball games. He also served a six year term on the Three Rivers College Board of Trustees. In every professional role he played, he carried his reputation for being a positive encourager.

Wilbur's strongest desire, though, was to live a life that glorified God. In his professional life, civic involvements, or in the unique way he sang from his heart and visited people in the hospital, his love for the Lord shone. He was a huge supporter of international mission

projects through General Baptist Ministries, seeing himself as a giver, sender, and supporter.

Most assuredly, Wilbur leaves a legacy of love for his family. He is survived by his wife and best friend of 18 years, Patti Thornton; a son, Doug Thornton (Debbie); a daughter, Julie Rice(Dennis); grandchildren, Leah Walker (Dusty), Will Thornton (Karen), and Kayla VonRuden (Zac); great-grand daughter, Ruby Grace Thornton; step sons Christopher Clinton and Joshua Clinton; and brother, Bill Thornton; a sister, Wanna VanCleve; and a great-niece very close to him, Cassie VanCleve Pinkerton.

He was preceded in death by his mother, Lilly McKenzie Thornton, his father, Wade Houston Thornton, and a brother, Wade Thornton.

Visitation will be held at Fellowship General Baptist Church from 5-7 P.M. Sunday, November 29.

All are welcome to join the family for a Celebration of Wilbur's Life at the same location at 1:00 P.M. Monday, November 30 with Rev. Byron Beck officiating. Interment will follow at Memorial Park Cemetery in Malden.

In lieu of flowers, gifts may be made to the Wilbur Thornton Memorial Fund at Ozark Federal Credit Union or General Baptist Women's Ministries; both mission outreach funds.

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## Candis E. Heck

NOVEMBER 27TH 2015 BY DEE LOFLIN

Candis E. Heck

**Candis E. “Candy” Heck**, daughter of C. J. and Helen Kinsey McCain, was born in Rockford, Illinois on February 2, 1952, and passed away at the St. Francis Medical Center in Cape Girardeau, Missouri on November 24, 2015, at the age of 63 years, 9 months and 22 days.

She had lived in Indiana & Colorado before moving to Bloomfield in 1992. She was a graduate of Bob Jones University in Greenville, South Carolina, and had taught at Christian schools in Indiana and Colorado. She attended Emmanuel Baptist Church in Dexter. She was an avid reader and enjoyed being outdoors.

Surviving are her parents, C. J. & Helen McCain of Bloomfield; one son and wife, William John & Marion Heck of Manhattan, Kansas; one daughter & husband, Megan & Brandon Byers of Eagle River, Alaska; one brother & wife, John Robert & Cinda McCain of Bloomfield; three grandchildren, Candis J., Joslyn & Branson Byers all of Eagle River, Alaska. Other relatives and friends also survive.

Friends may visit on Saturday, November 28, 2015, from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. at the Chiles-Cooper Funeral Home in Bloomfield, Missouri.

Funeral services will be on Sunday, November 29, 2015, at 2:00 p.m. at the Chiles-Cooper Funeral Home in Bloomfield with Pastor John McCain of Bloomfield, Missouri officiating and Rev. Shane Mallard of Dexter assisting.

Interment will follow at the Oak Ridge Cemetery near Bloomfield with Chiles-Cooper Funeral Home of Bloomfield, Missouri in charge of arrangements.

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## Helen Backfisch

NOVEMBER 25TH 2015 BY DEE LOFLIN

[Helen Backfisch](#)

**Helen Backfisch**, daughter of the late Fred Hoopingarner and Zena Lucas Hoopingarner, was born on December 29, 1919 in Dexter and departed this life on November 24, 2015 at Southeast Health Center of Stoddard County in Dexter at the age of 95.

Mrs. Backfisch was a member of the Faith Luthern Church in Dexter. She had worked at Elders Manufacturing in Dexter and was a resident of Dexter.

On February 8, 1946, she was united in marriage to Louis William Backfisch in Essex, Missouri. Mr. Backfisch preceded her in death on December 24, 2005.

She is survived by one sister-in-law, Doris Hoopingarner of Dexter and by many nieces and nephews.

In addition to her husband and parents, she was preceded in death by five brothers, Marion Hoopingarner, Melvin Hoopingarner, Marlin Hoopingarner, Martin Hoopingarner and Marvin Hoopingarner; and by one sister, Irene Jackson.

Friends may call at the Rainey-Mathis Funeral Home in Dexter on Friday, November 27, 2015 from 6:00 P.M. to 8:00 P.M.

Funeral services will be conducted at the Faith Lutheran Church in Dexter on Saturday, November 28, 2015 at 2:00 P.M. with Rev. Justin Sponaugle officiating.

Interment will follow in the Chalk Bluff Cemetery in Dexter.

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Donald R. Morgan, Sr.

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Donald R. Morgan, Sr.

**Donald R. Morgan, Sr.**, the son of the late Mike & Bertha Lee Pope Morgan, was born in Fisk, Missouri on November 2, 1930, and passed away at the St. Francis Medical Center in Cape Girardeau, Missouri on November 23, 2015 at the age of 85 years and 21 days.

Mr. Morgan had lived in House Springs and Imperial, Missouri before moving to Dexter in 1987. He moved to Dudley, Missouri fifteen years ago. He was a retired supervisor and had worked at the Bemis Co. He was an ordained minister with the Full Gospel Church and was a 32nd Degree Mason at the Hillsboro Masonic Lodge.

On September 1, 1973, he was married to Bertie Lee Nash in House Springs, Missouri.

Surviving are his wife, Bertie Morgan of Dudley; two daughters, Donna Aitchison of Arnold, Missouri, Connie & John Paubel of Robertsville, Missouri; two sons, Donald R., Jr. & Regina Morgan, William W. & Patricia Smith of Clarksburg, Missouri; twenty-four grandchildren; eighteen great grandchildren; and six great great grandchildren; and four step-children. Other relatives and friends also survive.

He was preceded in death by one brother, James C. Morgan.

Friends may call on Friday, November 27, 2015, from 11:00 am to 12:00 pm at the Watkins & Sons Funeral Home in Dexter, Missouri.

Funeral services will be held on Friday, November 27, 2015, at 12:00 pm at the Watkins & Sons Chapel in Dexter, Missouri with officiating.

Interment will be in the Brown Chapel Cemetery in Broseley, Missouri with Watkins & Sons Funeral Service of Dexter, Missouri in charge of arrangements.

Memorials may be made to the charity of your choice.

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## James Brian Smelser

NOVEMBER 23RD 2015 BY DEE LOFLIN

### James Brian Smelser

**James Brian Smelser** passed away on November 23, 2015 in Dexter, Missouri. The son of Dennis and Janie Smelser of Dexter, Missouri, Brian was born in Paragould, Arkansas on March 10, 1975. Brian was a graduate of Dexter High School with honors, and a graduate of Southeast Missouri State University in Cape Girardeau, Missouri with a Bachelor of Science degree in Unified Science with an emphasis on biology.

Brian taught high school science in the Risco and Richland school districts for three and one half years.

Later, Brian went back to college and earned a Bachelor of Science degree from Arkansas State University in Jonesboro, Arkansas in Radiologic Technology (emphasis MRI) and was a MRI Technician at Barnes-Jewish Hospital in St. Louis, Missouri for the past 10 years.

Brian's survivors include his parents, Dennis and Janie Smelser; one brother, Shaun Smelser; one sister-in-law, Emily Smelser; a niece, Lillianne Smelser; and a nephew, Emmett Smelser, all of Jackson, Missouri; and an aunt, Linda Morrow; and cousins, Keith and wife Michelle, and their son Briar Morrow, all of Paragould, Arkansas. Brian is also survived by two special friends, Pam Powell of Sikeston, Missouri, and Andy Spratt of St. Louis, Missouri, and his work family at Barnes-Jewish Hospital.

Brian was preceded in death by his maternal grandparents, James and Sylvia Morrow of the Stanford Community in Arkansas; paternal grandmother, Faye Smelser Partlow; and step

grandfather, J. K. "Buster" Partlow, both of Paragould, Arkansas. He was also preceded in death by his uncle, Wendell Morrow of Paragould, Arkansas.

Brian was an amateur meteorologist, an avid reader, and enjoyed cooking and trying new recipes.

He was also a fan of old TV shows, and a collector of Transformers. His favorite pastime was doting on his two rescue cats, Kari and Kagome. He was a member of the New Hope Fellowship Church in St. Louis.

Visitation and funeral service will be held at Rainey-Mathis Funeral Home in Dexter, Missouri on Tuesday, November 24, 2015, with Mark Snider officiating the services, and Andy Spratt giving the eulogy. Visitation begins at 5:00 PM followed by the funeral service at 6:30 PM. There will also be a graveside service at 10:00 AM the following morning (Wednesday) at Memorial Gardens in Paragould, Arkansas.

Serving as pallbearers will be Keith Morrow, Jerry Dorton, Brett Dorton, Ron Atherton, Dennis Reel, and Alan Hedrick. Andy Spratt is serving as an honorary pallbearer.

Memorials may be made to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, 501 St. Jude Place, Memphis, TN 38105; or memorials in his name to the Paragould Children's Home at 5515 Walcott Road, Paragould, AR 72450-3319.

The family expresses its thanks to all Brian's family and friends for their support during his illness and for the compassionate care received at Missouri Baptist Medical Center in St. Louis, and Crowley's Ridge Care Center in Dexter, Missouri, and Preferred Hospice in Dexter, Missouri.

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