



## Wilbur Reyburn Garrett Jr.

January 11, 1914 - February 12, 2016

Wilbur was born in Washington, DC, on January 11, 1914, to his loving parents, Wilbur and Edith. He was the eldest child, and was blessed to have two lovely sisters, Barbara and Mary. Wilbur passed away peacefully at his home on February 12, 2016, surrounded by family.

Wilbur had a very happy youth at the family home on Lamont Street in the Mount Pleasant area of Northwest Washington, which was a short distance from some of his favorite playgrounds such as Rock Creek Park, the National Zoo, and the Potomac River. As Wilbur matured, he worked during the summers for the family's construction company Skinker and Garrett General Contractors, learning the business from the ground up. These early years were spent in Washington when it was a quiet, friendly, and slow-paced southern city struggling through the Great Depression.

Wilbur graduated from Western High School in 1932. While there, he was an ROTC cadet. Thereafter, he attended George Washington University (GWU) from which he received a Bachelor of Science degree in Civil Engineering upon graduating in 1936. At this stage of his life, his goal was to work for the family's construction business, and he did so until 1939.

However, World War II intervened. Given his education, ROTC and construction experience, he was commissioned a U.S. Naval Reserve officer

and assigned to the famous Naval Construction Battalion known as the Seabees. His first assignment was a deployment to American Samoa to support infrastructure development including seaport, runway and base facilities. It was at this time that Pearl Harbor was attacked. He loved the tropics and brought home numerous native Samoan artworks many of which are on display in his home on the Chesapeake Bay on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. Subsequent assignments required considerable travel both domestically and overseas to assess the adequacy of naval facilities given the rapid increase in the Navy's expansion and likely future fleet deployment locations. He traveled to certain of these locations on PBY Catalina and Flying Clipper seaplanes. Seeing the world from above was considered fascinating by this young man. Later in his service, he was stationed at Seabee headquarters in Rhode Island on what turned out to be a short-term assignment. It was at this time that he met and married the love of his life, Bertha Connell Cooney. Near the end of 1943, Wilbur was deployed to England to conduct naval planning for the 1944 invasion of France. He was extremely proud of his service in both the Pacific and European theaters. After the D Day invasion, he was assigned to Naval Headquarters at the Washington Naval Yard; back in the city he so loved. During this assignment, he was involved in the naval planning necessary to carry out an invasion of Japan utilizing pontoon bridging. When WW II concluded, he requested and received an honorable discharge in 1945 with the rank of Lieutenant Commander.

Wilbur and Bertha met in May of 1943 during a USO event at the Biltmore Hotel in Providence, RI. After a brief courtship, they were married at St. Michael's Catholic Church in Providence on October 16, 1943. With the war over and back in Washington, they started their family. They moved from Washington to Potomac, MD, where they raised their six children. At this time, Potomac was pure country. They purchased 24 acres and a very old house, which they remodeled and added on to as the family grew in size. They called

their country home “Wickford” so named for the Rhode Island village where Bertha’s family took summer vacations, and where she and Wilbur lived briefly as he continued his naval service. A lot of love and fun was had by all during the 34 years the family lived in Potomac.

Wilbur returned to the family business after the war with a heightened awareness of the role of large scale construction project management. This proved valuable in transforming Skinker and Garrett into a corporation which was able to pursue government and commercial building contracts in a booming post war Washington metro area. Wilbur pursued and received a Professional Engineering license from the Washington, DC government in 1951. This represented a high level of engineering recognition allowing Wilbur to develop, stamp and seal his own drawings. Wilbur was the president of Skinker and Garrett for several decades, during which time the company had grown to become one of the largest and most respected union contractors in town. The range and diversity of the construction projects performed was impressive. Skinker and Garrett was sold in 1983 as the principals of the firm decided it was time to retire. During Wilbur’s time with the firm, he was also involved in residential land development projects in Montgomery County and Queen Anne’s County on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. Wilbur was particularly proud of Queen Anne Colony, which is a lovely subdivision of 300 plus homesites located on Kent Island which he and three of his best friends developed over the course of several decades. Wilbur would often be heard to say that the family had the best of Potomac and Kent Island.

Wilbur was a member in numerous professional, civic, and social organizations. Some of which include the GWU Alumni Association, the Washington Building Congress, Master Builders / Associated General Contractors, Kiwanis, Wades Point Rockfish, Oyster and Crab Combine, and perhaps his most favorite, Columbia Country Club in Chevy Chase, MD. His

father was one of the earliest members of the club, and Wilbur was the oldest member at his passing with over seven decades of membership. This fraternity of associations, along with all the business and schooling friendships and acquaintances made over the years, gave Wilbur a great sense of personal satisfaction, and helped him to become a successful, well respected Washingtonian.

When all the children were grown and on their own, Wilbur and Bertha moved in 1978 to their current home in Queen Anne Colony, which they had built in the early 1960's with an addition here and there along the way. Their house fronts the Chesapeake Bay across from Annapolis where they witnessed many spectacular sunsets over the years. While Wilbur was always busy with construction projects around the house, Bertha decorated the house and gardened the grounds beautifully. For both, the home was a lovely retreat and a place to entertain family and friends during their many retirement years together. They traveled extensively to various European destinations, North and Central America, the Caribbean and Hawaii. Their mutual love of travel was often based on common interests such as history, architecture, and of course, golf. A highlight of spring travels was regular attendance for many years at the Masters golf tournament in Augusta, Georgia. Where ever their travels took them, they were always glad to get back to their home on Kent Island on the bay.

At home in the land of pleasant living, they enjoyed a universe of friends with similar social interests. They were devoted parents who willingly sought to assist their children in every regard; their love of family was always a top priority. Wilbur always enjoyed being outdoors golfing, hunting, boating, fishing, swimming and ,of course, remodeling projects. He was very fortunate to be remarkably free of chronic illness throughout his 102 year life. What a blessing to all, and how can you beat 72 years of marriage to the real love of his life, Bertha, or as he would often call her "sweetie." Wilbur was an

engineer, builder and craftsman who was thrilled with the evolution of his hometown of the nation's capital, and the role he played in its development. His memory will be cherished by family and friends for many years to come.

Wilbur is survived by his beloved wife, Bertha; his sister, Mary Howard; his children, Lynn, Michael, Peter, Mark, Mary, and John. He will always be remembered by his grandchildren, Stephen, and his bride Lisa, Brian, Michael, Sean, Molly, and Jeff as the best grandfather and patriarch that one could ever hope to have in life.

A Funeral Mass will be held at St. Christopher's Catholic Church in Chester, MD, on Saturday April 23, 2016 at 10:00 a.m. located at 1861 Harbor Drive.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Compass Regional Hospice, 255 Comet Drive, Centreville, MD. 21617.

# Tribute Wall



“ *Fellows, Helfenbein & Newnam Funeral Home created a Tribute Video in memory of Wilbur Reyburn Garrett Jr.*



Fellows, Helfenbein & Newnam Funeral Home - April 19, 2016 at 12:39 PM



“ *Wilbur Reyburn Garrett Jr.*

January 28, 2023 at 12:44 PM



“ *Wilbur Reyburn Garrett Jr.*

January 28, 2023 at 08:03 AM



“ *303 files added to the album LifeTributes*



Down in Virginia,  
Nowhere the days seem quite so long,  
As in Virginia,  
Nowhere so filled with happy song,  
As in Virginia,  
And when it comes my time to die,  
Just take me back and let me lie,  
Down where the James goes rolling by,  
Down in Virginia.  
Nowhere is there a land so fair,  
As old Virginia,  
So full of love and free of care,  
As in Virginia.



Fellows, Helfenbein & Newnam Funeral Home - April 19, 2016 at 12:06 PM



“ 0 file added to the tribute wall

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**Fellows, Helfenbein & Newnam Funeral Home** - April 18, 2016 at 04:06 PM

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“ *Condolences and love to all of the Garrett family. I believe I spent as much time as a young child romping and horseback riding in Potomac with Lynn. I also learned to drive a tractor!! And whitewash a fence!! Thanks to Mr. Wilbur. Then there were trips to the club and grocery shopping with Mrs. G..... This is the one family I truly loved to be around during those early years. Thank goodness the whole family had so many years to be with a most kind, loveable gentleman. Bless you all.*

*With much love and great memories,  
Sallie Holzberg*

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**Sallie Holzberg** - February 24, 2016 at 02:13 PM

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“ *My sincerest condolences to the family. Although we were just acquainted through St Christophers, he will always be remembered by his great smile, sweet demeanor and lovely family. You were truly blessed to have him in your lives and continue to hold him in your hearts.*

*Sincerely,*

*Nanette Cunningham*

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**Nanette Cunningham** - February 19, 2016 at 08:22 AM