



## U.S. Navy Retired Chief Willis D. Stagner

July 25, 1938 - April 28, 2024

Chief Willis Delmo Stagner, US Navy Retired, 85, of Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, died peacefully in his sleep on Sunday, 28 April 2024, surrounded by his loving family.

Chief Stagner was born in Salem, Missouri on 25 July 1938 to Gilbert and Elsie (nee Malone) Stagner. At the age of fourteen, his beloved mother died of cancer just before Christmas 1952. After some difficult years in his hometown, he left to join the US Navy at the age of seventeen. While on leave in 1959, Chief Stagner returned to Salem where he met and proposed to Frances Evelyn Harris. They married on 7 March 1959, one month after their first date. Soon after their marriage, he left the Navy with the promise of a job in Salem. When that job fell through, Chief Stagner reenlisted and took his pregnant wife to California. His sons Randall and Ronald were born near Point Mugu Naval Air Station in 1960 and 1961, respectively. His youngest son, Robert, would be born in 1962 at Salem, Missouri. Chief Stagner's family lived in Millington, Tennessee; Key West, Florida; and Iroquois Point, Hawaii during his two decades of service. He served on the aircraft carriers USS Kearsarge and USS Forrestal, and in Navy Patrol Squadrons VS-29, VP-22, and VP-17. Chief Stagner had multiple deployments to Southeast Asia and the coastal waters of Vietnam during the war. His primary duty was to locate, identify and interdict hostile ships and submarines as an aircrewman onboard P-3B/C and S-2F aircraft.

After retiring from military service, Chief Stagner returned to Missouri to be near extended family. He used the GI Bill to attain certificates in heating and cooling and worked for himself and for others for many years. He even delivered mail in rural Phelps County for a few years. Chief Stagner loved the ocean and would travel to North Carolina and Florida to spend time at the beach when he could. In his spare time, he also enjoyed painting, listening to bluegrass music, tending his flower garden, and researching family history. He and Fran moved from Phelps County back to Dent County in the mid-1980s and stayed there until moving to Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri for these last five years. He lost his wife of sixty-three years in 2022.

Chief Stagner is survived by his three sons: Colonel Randall Stagner (US Army Retired) and wife Deborah of Raleigh, NC; Ronald Stagner of Fort Leonard Wood, MO; and, Robert Stagner (US Navy Retired) and wife Judy of Brandon, MS; stepbrother, Albert Stagner and wife Janet of Moore, OK; eight grandchildren: Michael, Bryan, Forrest, Westley, Ronni, James, Willis, and Warren; and many great-grandchildren, as well as a host of nieces, nephews, cousins, other relatives and dear friends.

Online Condolences may be entered at [www.wilsonmortuary.com](http://www.wilsonmortuary.com)

# Cemetery Details

## Cedar Grove Cemetery

Salem, MO

# Previous Events

## Visitation

MAY 4. 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM (CT)

Wilson Mortuary - Salem  
1000 West Scenic Rivers Blvd.  
Post Office Box 45  
Salem, MO 65560  
(573) 729-5555  
<https://www.wilsonmortuary.com/>

## Funeral Service

MAY 4. 12:00 PM (CT)

Wilson Mortuary - Salem  
1000 West Scenic Rivers Blvd.  
Post Office Box 45  
Salem, MO 65560  
(573) 729-5555  
<https://www.wilsonmortuary.com/>

# Tribute Wall



“ 204 files added to the album LifeTributes



Wilson Mortuary - May 03, 2024 at 02:19 PM

RH

“ Ricky and Beth Harris purchased the Basket Full of Wishes for the family of U.S. Navy Retired Chief Willis D. Stagner.



Ricky and Beth Harris - May 02, 2024 at 03:32 PM

RH

“ Ricky and Beth Harris planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of U.S. Navy Retired Chief Willis D. Stagner.

Ricky and Beth Harris - May 02, 2024 at 03:32 PM



“ Days of Sunshine Bouquet was purchased for the family of U.S. Navy Retired Chief Willis D. Stagner.



April 30, 2024 at 09:25 PM



“ Bob & Catherine Billington purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of U.S. Navy Retired Chief Willis D. Stagner.



**Bob & Catherine Billington** - April 30, 2024 at 07:38 PM



“ Emerald Garden Basket was purchased for the family of U.S. Navy Retired Chief Willis D. Stagner.



April 30, 2024 at 06:46 PM



“ mike& mary malone planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of U.S. Navy Retired Chief Willis D. Stagner.

**mike& mary malone** - April 30, 2024 at 06:46 PM

SW

“ Steve & Sandy Wishon lit a candle in memory of U.S. Navy Retired Chief Willis D. Stagner



Steve & Sandy Wishon - April 30, 2024 at 05:09 PM

LH

“ Lois Werts, Stan Werts, Jane Hoffman purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of U.S. Navy Retired Chief Willis D. Stagner.



Lois Werts, Stan Werts, Jane Hoffman - April 30, 2024 at 04:53 PM

KD

“ Katie D. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of U.S. Navy Retired Chief Willis D. Stagner.

Katie D. - April 30, 2024 at 02:28 PM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of U.S. Navy Retired Chief Willis D. Stagner.



April 30, 2024 at 10:08 AM

TF

“ *The Sullivan-Casey Family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of U.S. Navy Retired Chief Willis D. Stagner.*

**The Sullivan-Casey Family** - April 30, 2024 at 10:08 AM

JH

“ *Jerry Higgins lit a candle in memory of U.S. Navy Retired Chief Willis D. Stagner*



**jerry higgins** - April 30, 2024 at 09:49 AM

JH

*my family grew up with willis and his family.they were good people.*

**jerry higgins** - April 30, 2024 at 09:51 AM