

## *In Loving Memory of Chaplain Don "Papa 1" Wilson*



On October 7, 2010, we lost a valued member and friend of Anderson Police Department. Chaplain Don "Papa 1" Wilson served the department and the community for many years. When Chaplain Wilson discovered he had an aggressive form of cancer, he decided to plan his own memorial service. The following is his Obituary and Eulogy which he prepared himself:

### **Obituary:**

THE REVEREND DON F. WILSON

SEPTEMBER 30, 1932 – OCTOBER 7, 2010

STARR, SC – The Reverend Don Franklin Wilson, age 78, of 1520 Agnew Road, passed away on Thursday, October 7, 2010, at the Rainey Hospice House in Anderson.

Born in Patterson Springs, NC, on September 30, 1932, he was a son of the late Adkin Andrew Wilson and Annie D. Turner Wilson. He served as a Radio Operator on the USS York Town while serving in the United States Navy. Reverend Wilson graduated from No. 3 High School in Patterson Springs, NC, received his Associates Degree from North Greenville Junior College, his Bachelors Degree from Gardner-Webb University, and his Masters of Divinity and Doctor of Ministry from the Southern Seminary in Louisville, KY. He was a retired Baptist Minister having served Ridgewood Baptist Church in Greer, SC, Plum Creek Baptist Church in Vevay, IN, and Long Branch Baptist Church in Anderson, SC. He served as Interim Minister for the congregations of Mt. Tabor, Flat Rock, Shiloh, and Carswell. Reverend Wilson was currently an active member of Starr Baptist Church. While a resident of Miami, FL, he served as the Office Manager for Carolina Freight Carriers, as the Production Planner for Eastern Airlines, and as a Ticket Agent for Eastern Airlines. He was a former Chaplain and Reserve Officer for the City of Anderson Police Department, where many knew him as "Papa 1". In addition to being an avid golfer, Reverend Wilson was a member of the Electric City Lions Club and was a volunteer for Meals on Wheels.

Survivors include his beloved wife, Helen S. Vaughn Wilson, of the home; a daughter, Amy Wilson Sexton and husband, Michael R. Sexton; a grandson, Weston Eric Sexton; a granddaughter, Ayrn Denese Sexton; a step-granddaughter, Amanda Sexton Wilson and

husband, Josh Wilson; and a great grandson, Haiden Michael Wilson.

In addition to his parents, Reverend Wilson was predeceased by brothers: Ned Turner Wilson, Billy Adkin Wilson, and Max Wilson; and sisters: Edith Faye Wilson Dawson, Judy Elaine Wilson Rice, and Sara Wilson Goforth.

The Funeral Service was held on Sunday, October 10, 2010, at Long Branch Baptist Church, conducted by the Reverend Hudson White. Reverend Wilson was laid to rest at Forest Lawn Memorial Park.

### **Eulogy:**

Over the past couple years, Brother Don had toyed with the idea of today's Celebrative Gathering. When he learned of the skin cancer on June 2<sup>nd</sup> and the prognosis is that Merkel Cell cancer is super aggressive AND VERY, VERY fast acting. Then, Don opted to plan this party himself. Don said he realized the whole time that "It's extremely difficult to remember that your primary duty was to drain the swamp when you find yourself waist deep in gators. Miss Helen said, "You da man! Go for it"! OK friends, here it is. Away we go!"

My close friend, good buddy, and terrific preacher pal, Rev. Hudson White, Pastor of Truth Tabernacle Baptist Church speaks for me today. Our ties go way back.

Brother Don told me he had attended hog callings visited county fairs, watched goat ropings, witnessed a little bit of pro rasslin', but today was his very first rodeo. Helen and Don trust it's a meaningful part of this celebration.

Thank you all for the many, many prayers and words of encouragement. So very many have cared so very deeply.

"They were meaningful words: the words in a small church yard in old New England, where the composer of the great hymn of faith "Amazing Grace" was laid to rest. Inside the church his , outside on his stone this inscription: John Newton, clerk, once an infidel and libertine, a servant of slaves in Africa, was led by the rich mercy of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, preserved, restored, pardoned and appointed to preach the faith he had long labored to destroy"

On September 30, 1932, Adkin and Annie Wilson of Earl NC became the proud parents of a really good looking baby boy, Don Franklin Wilson. Don was number 6 of 7 children, 3 brothers and 3 sisters. Don's sharecropping, cotton farming, hardworking mom and dad were good, delightful Christians. Poor, but didn't know it. We had cousins by the dozens. Today, I'm with my whole family again Judy and Edith and Sarah and Billy and Ned and Max. My dad had to quit farming in World War 2 because all four of us boys were in the service. My 4 years in the Navy and Far East, 2 aboard the Carrier, USS Yorktown, was a real blast. A tow-headed young'in goes around the world...that's not too shabby!

I vividly remember a fall revival meeting at New Hope Baptist Church in 1944. Dr. J.L. Suttle was waxing eloquent and cited the scripture: "What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul, or what shall a man give in exchange for his own soul?" That very night the earth didn't shake, the mountains didn't quake, the angels didn't sing, and nobody passed out. But, Don Wilson was changed forever! Preacher White will tell you for me, the journey is terrific but the destination is out of this world. Saved, always and forever.

My 16 years at Long Branch, 1979-1995, was an absolute dream in Technicolor. The profits of our labors together can only be measured in eternity. Those years were wonderful and glory filled days. The church was really blessed by God. Our finances, evangelism, baptisms, fellowship, music, Sunday school, missions, and the Cooperative Program. We had 265 additions of which 148 were professions of faith. God, thank you for your leading and power and manifesting your glory and power in the life of the church.

Long Branch Church: May God's hand guide you  
Long Branch Church: May God's love thrill you  
Long Branch Church: May God's word inform you  
Long Branch Church: May His Spirit inspire you  
Long Branch Church: May His Grace amaze you

And, may His Son, our Savior, be your Master, your message and your mission in every endeavor in the future. I held you dear to my heart. Still do, while I'm spending the day with God with no cancer neither.

Since my retirement from this great church, I have been fairly busy. I've enjoyed four interims as pastor: Mt. Tabor Baptist Church, Flat Rock Baptist Church, Shiloh Baptist Church, and Carswell Baptist Church. I've supplied in practically each church in Anderson County. I gave 20 years as chaplain to the Anderson City Police Department and was known to all in the department as "Papa 1".

Then I gave 13 years as community chairman of Keep America Beautiful.

Four years as a reserve city police officer. This little gig lasted until I realized that the minute I caught the suspect, he was gonna do his level best to beat me severely about the head and shoulders. My mama done taught me when to fold'em, when to hold'em, and when to walk away. Ain't nothing hi-faluting about that Pretty good deal I think.

I spent six months delivering Meals on Wheels.

Worked on and almost finished restoring a 1939 Allis Chalmers Tractor. Lost \$700.00

Worked on and didn't know when to stop a 1954 Ford Pickup. Only lost \$5000.00, but look at the education...outta sight...

I'm only trying to leave the world a better place. Just a smidgen...a doo dab for sure.

One of my professors at Gardner Webb told the class: "Life is over and soon is past. Only those things done for Christ, will ever last"...that is wisdom extraordinaire...

I have a message for a very special lady, my dear and beloved wife, Helen.

She was my cohort, my best friend, my soul mate, and my compassionate better-half. She's the delightful woman who coaches me into victory lane during the past 50 years. Helen excelled in motherhood. She managed the Wilson household better than any CPA. I fondly remember the blind date at Limestone College in Gaffney. John Wiley and I were blind dating onto the college came this 5'0, 105 lb Miss. America. I told John I get that short one. Praise the Lord!

Miss. Helen didn't marry no preacher boy. I was hooked up with Eastern Airlines at Greenville-Spartanburg airport. No idea of taking a pay cut and down grading to be a preacher. However, God got my attention at age 40. I lay in Greenville General Hospital completely paralyzed and the doctors said I'd had a stroke. The first night in the hospital God and me got together and worked it out. I said, "Lord I know I'm here. When do you want me to start?" God said, "Right away." Later I walked out of the hospital and the doctor said, "Smelling like a rose." Two months later I'm going to Gardner Webb College. You know who put me through? Helen Sharon Wilson. Do you know who financed my Masters Program studies at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary at Louisville? Helen Sharon Wilson. Do you know who sacrificed for my Doctorate

Studies at Southern in Louisville? Yep! Good old Helen. No sir, Helen didn't marry no preacher boy, but she became the epitome of what every preacher's wife should be! Thank you Helen for your passionate love, time, and devotion. You're the greatest. You're a keeper for sure, especially cause you could see to drive after dark!  
Tell you what friends, Preaching is the highest calling there is.

Just like you all, I loved my youngins and grandyoungins. Amy really sacrificed several teenage years as I studied in Seminary. Those were crazy years in Louisville in the 70's. Amy was bussed 18 miles one way to a high school in order to achieve racial segregation. We did give her as a bribe, I mean as a gift, for graduation a brand new Mustang. Amy majored in Management Information Systems in college. You know what her first job was at the Anderson Police Department being a Dispatcher. Moved on up however, she's Administrative Supervisor now.

Miss Ayrn's doing fine in college studying Pre-med as a sophomore at the University of South Carolina. Wes is a boy of many talents, awesome wrestler with the heart of a lamb. He would give you the shirt off his back. I remember at 10 years of age Wes asked me, "Papa, are you old enough to die?" The answer is the same today as it was then, "Yes Wes, Papa is old enough to die and ready too!" You know what folks; we live like we've got 30 or 40 more years, when we don't have the promise of 30 or 40 more minutes.

