



Mr. Ernest Lee Gates

February 26, 1946 - December 7, 2020

Ernest Lee Gates was born February 26, 1946, to the late Louise Gates and Earl Strong in Millington, Tennessee. He grew up in a blended family environment that increased his siblings and other relatives. In addition to his birth parents, he was blessed to be a member of the family of Annie Mae and Earl Kirk. He accepted Christ as his Savior at an early age and was baptized at the Greater Bush Grove Baptist Church in Lakeland, Tennessee under the leadership of the late Reverend John Greer.

Ernest "Fireball" spent his formative years in the close-knit community of Brunswick, Tennessee where he attended Brunswick Elementary and Barretts Chapel High School. He formed many relationships with young and old that lasted a lifetime. He loved to visit and reconnect during his many trips back to Tennessee and during his travels to other states. He never met a stranger and would reach out to others and make every effort possible to put a smile on their face.

Ernest enlisted in the United States Marine Corp. in January 1967 and was a Vietnam War Veteran. He never forgot to remind you that "Once a Marine, Always a Marine." He was honorably discharged in April 1970. After military service he moved to Milwaukee where he met and later married Carolyn Wilson.

Ernest worked for Love's Liquor until he was injured and began his first of many surgeries. Between his recovery times he spent a great deal of

time with the children in his family. He had a special relationship with his nephew, Justin Moore who gave him a gift that read "Best Friends for Life." He was a long-standing member of the Friendship Club where he enjoyed playing cards, dominos and hanging out with people. Once it became too difficult for him to drive or get around, he started his own club in his garage. He spent a lot of time playing cards, dominos, and talking on the phone. He enjoyed friends of all ages and would always let you know how he felt about you. From the time Ernest was young, he developed the ability to adapt to whatever surroundings, situations and people that were near him. It was his coping mechanism for his own wellbeing and not an opportunity to hurt or make a difference in people. He lived and interacted by his own rules. He spent much of his time at the VA Hospital due to his many illnesses.

Ernest entered into eternal rest on December 7, 2020. He was preceded in death by his parents, four sisters, and seven brothers. Left to cherish his memory are his wife, Carolyn Gates; four daughters, Tracey (John) Eaton, Tierra Gates, Carey, and Christine Wilson all of Milwaukee, WI; son, Christopher Mason of Nashville, TN; three brothers, Johnnie (Mary) Gates, Walter Gates of Memphis, TN, and Walter (Georgia) Johnson of St. Louis, MO; three sisters, Ann (Kevin) Ricks of California, Ernestine Swift of Nashville, TN, and Betty Smith of Milwaukee, WI; and one aunt, Lois Hayes of Memphis, TN; three sisters-in-law, Diann (Ray) Whitaker, Janet (Ronald) Fudge, and Ann Beth Moore of Milwaukee, WI; one brother-in-law, Robert Moore of Milwaukee, WI; and a host of grandchildren, nieces, nephews, cousins, and friends.

Cemetery Details

VA Union Grove Cemetery

21731 Spring Street
Union Grove, WI

Previous Events

Visitation

DEC 19. 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM (CT)

Northwest Funeral Chapel
6630 W. Hampton Ave
Milwaukee, WI

Service

DEC 19. 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM (CT)

Northwest Funeral Chapel
6630 W. Hampton Ave
Milwaukee, WI

Tribute Wall

NK

“ *What a lovely testimony of all the people who knew and loved my Dad. I only wish I had known of his passing before now.*

Naida Keech - April 13, 2022 at 10:16 AM

ES

“ *Will miss Ernest Lee and all the fund childhood memories we had can not come up with as many as Betty had. We never had a dull moment with you around. To Carolyn ,children and grandchildren prayers and thought are with you. Farwell to Ernest as he join the rest of our sibilings.*

Enestine Swift - December 19, 2020 at 03:23 PM



I'm so sorry for your loss. I just found out that Ernest was my grandfather from ancestry.com. I would love to meet the rest of my family. ❤️❤️❤️

Aisya Carroll - July 07, 2022 at 03:09 PM

MN

“ *To Carol and Family,
Sending my heartfelt condolences from Gary, Indiana. Praying for your strength and comfort during this time of bereavement.*

Minietta Nelson

Minietta Nelson - December 19, 2020 at 03:10 PM

BC

“ *Betty A Cody lit a candle in memory of Mr. Ernest Lee Gates*



Betty A Cody - December 19, 2020 at 01:23 PM

BC

“ *Ernest, remembering you fondly from the old days in the Brunswick Subdivision. My prayers are with your family as you rest in peace.*

Betty A Cody - December 19, 2020 at 01:21 PM

(L

“ *My Loving uncle Earnest miss you already missing your calls at the wee hours into the morning saying wake yo tail up and I will look at the phone and say call you back at daylight and he just calling I'm going to miss those calls!!!LOVING YOU!!!*

(Littlebit) - December 17, 2020 at 10:33 PM

CF

“ *Uncle Ernest it's your favorite niece, your Ms. Tennessee and I love you and miss you already! I remember being a little girl and you would let us get in your blue car and we knew that meant we were going to get a treat! I also remember your apartment on the east side and being scared to go down to the storage and you would say as long as you were there we had nothing to worry about! Now you're not here but I feel your presence! I have seen a car with a Tennessee license plate fir the past week in my way to work and I know it's you! I love you!*

Courtney Fudge - December 14, 2020 at 08:40 PM

KR

“ *Brother-in-Law, never would I have believed that our last time together, that you, Archie and Ham were sharing our last time together. But, now, as a fellow Marine, I can say, Semper Fi and another Marine is reporting. Devil Dog, you've gotten two wings place at you feet as you depart, and join your previously departed siblings.*

As we say, goodbye, for now, our paths will cross again. My mother, your buddy will be waiting too.

We will miss you, your family in California, Tennessee, Omaha and Nevada.

Your nephews & neices, great neices and nephews and now great-great neices and nephews, Spread Your Wings and Rest in Eternal Peace.

Our Deepest Sympathies, as you knock on the Gates of Heaven. You now have two wings to lay at your feet.

Kevin and Christal-Ann Ricks & Family



Kevin Ricks - December 13, 2020 at 05:28 PM

BS

“ *Fireball we have been brother and sister since we were 6 years old. We loved and accepted each other in spite of our differences. I will miss you but I know you are no longer suffering. My thoughts and prayers are with your Family and friends.*

Betty Smith - December 13, 2020 at 05:32 AM