



Joseph Emanuel Schaefer

MAR 25, 1940 - APR 30, 2024



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Joseph Emanuel Schaefer, 84, of Tallahassee, Florida, passed away peacefully on 30 April 2024, after a long fight with dementia. He has gone home, a good and faithful servant.

Joe was born on 25 March 1940, the only child of Herbert Emanuel Schaefer and Ruby Myrtle Miley, née Berry, at the Berry family home on a farm in Lucknow, South Carolina. He spent most of his early childhood with his much-beloved maternal grandparents, Joe and Lillie Belle Berry; his uncles Cliff and Claude; and his cousin Beverly Hall, née Berry. As a child, Joe was turned loose to wander the scrub, all by himself, shirtless, a .22 rifle in hand, to hunt rabbits. He fished the mill pond and rode around on farm business with his uncles. Joe apparently had the best, most American childhood ever and he remembered it fondly all his life, until dementia stole that away from him. Every fall, at the first cool weather, he would remember days past, and he would say, "I guess it's hog killing time."

Joe later lived with Ruby and Herbert in Savannah, Georgia. There, he spent his free time hunting and fishing and having wholesome, but rascally, adventures with his life-long friend Hammond Eve. He worked at Union Bag, from which his father, Herb, eventually retired. He graduated from Savannah High School in 1958, then graduated from Georgia Tech with a degree in Civil Engineering.

In 1965, Joe was commissioned as an officer in the United States Air force, where he was promoted to the rank of Captain. He served during the Vietnam War and was awarded the National Defense Service Medal. Stationed in Japan, a country that he loved, he was an air traffic controller at Itazuke Tower, and later, the commander of a base engineering unit at Tachikawa Air Force Base. In 1971, Joe began working for the Florida Department of Transportation, first as a Civil Engineer on highway projects, then, upon completion of his Masters Degree in Traffic Engineering at Florida State University in 1996, as the chief Traffic Engineer for the FDOT Central Office. Joe retired from the FDOT in 2005, whereupon he embarked on a successful self-employed career in stock trading.



Obituary

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In 1966, Joe met Helen Kay Batey in Blytheville, Arkansas, while he was stationed at Blytheville Air Force Base. They married and moved to Japan, where they had two children, Sonia Sherrie Schaefer, born in May 1969 on Sasebo Naval Base, and Shep Schaefer, born in March 1971 at Tachikawa Air Force Base in Tokyo. Sonia passed away far too young, in 2021. By this time, however, Joe's dementia had progressed to the point that he did not remember anyone, so it was a great and tremendous blessing that the family did not have to give him the worst news that a parent can ever receive—that their child has gone on before them. Sonia and Joe are survived by Sonia's children Rachael Farnam, née Guajardo, and Sherrie Guffey, née Guajardo, and by Sherrie's children Wynter and Lawrence. Joe is also survived by Shep and by Shep's daughter, Lillie.

Joe loved hunting and fishing and he passed that love onto Sonia and Shep, who both have loved fishing beyond all measure. When he retired, though, he put all that aside, except for the yearly opening-day squirrel hunt, to trade stocks. When asked why he didn't spend his retirement and his money traveling or hunting and fishing, he said that he needed to earn more money to make sure his children's futures were secure when he was gone.

Joe was a follower of Jesus Christ, and he passed that faith on to his children. That faith is their greatest inheritance. He was also a man of honor, and he taught that honor to his children.

Graveside services will be held at Concord Community Bible Church Cemetery in Bishopville, SC on Sunday, May 5th, 2024 at 2:00 P.M. EDT. Joe will be laid to rest in the cemetery of the church that he grew up in, surrounded by his family who have gone home before him, including his mother, Ruby, and his grandmother, Lillie Belle. Flowers for the service are welcome. But Joe would also appreciate donations to Big Bend Hospice, which organization helped both him and his mother leave this world in peace and comfort.



Tribute Wall

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May 1 at 3:42 PM





Memories only last if you share them

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