



## Jesse Alexander Key

March 12, 1928 - November 9, 2019

Salisbury, NC – Jesse Alexander Key died peacefully in the early morning hours of Saturday, November 9, 2019 at Trinity Oaks Retirement Center with his beloved wife, Mary, at his side. His passing was due to complications from Guillain Barre Syndrome.

Jesse was born on March 12, 1928, in Chattanooga, TN, to the late John Otis and Ruth Alexander Key. In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his first wife of 42 years, Betty Jane Williams Key; brother, John Miller Key; and grandson, Daniel Alexander Brown.

Jesse is survived by his wife of 22 years, Mary Penn Drinkard Key; one brother, James Perry Key and wife Jean of Stillwater, OK; two daughters, Carol Key Brown and husband Tim of Marshall, NC, and Susan Key Conrad and husband Scott of Asheville, NC; two sons, Kenneth William Key and wife Robin of Kona, HI, and Steven Alexander Key of Carrollton, TX; one granddaughter, Justine Brown; two grandsons, Tyler Brown and wife Lisa, and Alexander Brown; three stepsons, Jim Drinkard and wife Kathy, Steve Drinkard and wife Lina, and Mike Drinkard and wife Gail; three stepdaughters, Deborah Houghton and husband Harold, Kathy McIndoe and husband Scott, and Carol O'Loughlin and husband Gerry; three nieces and two nephews; 15 step-grandchildren and their spouses, and 8 step-great-grandchildren. Jesse referred fondly to his blended family as This Great Big Family.

Jesse was a 1946 graduate of E. W. Grove High School in Paris, TN, and after military service in the Army of the United States he enrolled in the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Upon graduation in 1952, he received a B.S. degree in Chemical Engineering and was commissioned a Second Lieutenant in the United States Air Force Reserves. He served on active duty from 1952 until 1956, when he was employed by the Dow Chemical Company of Midland, MI. In 1975 Dow transferred Jesse and 20 other engineers to Hydrosience, which later became IT Envirosience in Knoxville, TN. Jesse continued working in environmental consulting until his retirement in 1997.

Always a fan of the latest technology, Jesse's interest in communications systems followed him through life. At a young age, Jesse built his first radio. While traveling for their military duties he and his brothers mailed reel-to-reel tapes with recorded greetings to each other. He enjoyed being a ham radio operator during the 1970s, but was especially delighted when his family joined him in chatting on CB radios during multi-car road trips. Next, computers and email allowed easy contact with his children who by that time lived in four different states. It came as no surprise that Jesse embraced cell phones, texting, and Facebook for their efficient communication with the many members of his new "insta-family" after he and Mary were married. Jesse valued his friends from his time living in Michigan, Tennessee, and North Carolina, and enjoyed keeping in touch using a variety of technologies. Many of his friends knew he could be counted on, at the mere mention of a question, to whip out his phone and find the answer. He maintained contact with his brothers with a weekly Sunday morning call, and Jesse's children cherish their Sunday night phone calls, conference-style, presided over by their Dad.

Jesse was a lifelong member of the Presbyterian Church (USA). He was a charter member, along with Jane Key, of Chapel Lane Presbyterian Church in Midland, MI, and Farragut Presbyterian Church in Farragut, TN. Most recently, he and Mary were members of John Calvin Presbyterian Church in Salisbury, NC.

A memorial service will be held at 11 a.m. Saturday, November 16, 2019, at Trinity Oaks Retirement Center in Salisbury in the Special Events Room. The service will be followed by a reception and time of fellowship.

Memorial gifts in Jesse's memory may be made to the charity of the donor's choice or to John Calvin Presbyterian Church in Salisbury. Donations of blood and plasma to local blood banks would also be appreciated.

Summersett Funeral Home in Salisbury is in charge of arrangements. Online condolences may be made at <http://www.summersettfuneralhome.com>.

# Events

---

**NOV**   **Memorial Service**   11:00AM  
**16**

---

Trinity Oaks  
728 Klumac Rd., Salisbury, NC, US, 28144

# Comments

---



“ I have just found out yesterday that Jesse had died. I have been consumed with the care and death of my husband, Charles Stuewe, on December 5, and didn't realize that our friend of many, many years had also just died. We have known Jesse since we moved to Midland in 1962 and both our families attended Chapel Lane Presbyterian Church. Our kids grew up together and we all moved to Knoxville together. Jesse called me about my husband's illness just about the time Jesse died. Typical of his care and concern for his friends. We will all miss him, but I feel he greeted Charles when he also got to heaven. Bless you, Jesse, you were a wonderful person and a precious friend.

Dorean Stuewe

Dorean Stuewe - December 21, 2019 at 09:52 PM

---



“ Mary, I send you hugs and support as these next days go by. We miss you both at the pool and know that Jesse is at peace..that disease is frightful..love , Linda

linda - November 16, 2019 at 08:52 AM

---



“ Arrive in Style was purchased for the family of Jesse Alexander Key.



November 14, 2019 at 07:29 PM

---



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Jesse Alexander Key.



November 14, 2019 at 05:47 PM



“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album



**Steve Key** - November 13, 2019 at 01:18 PM

---



“ Getting to know Jess and Mary during my tenure as Interim Pastor of John Calvin Presbyterian Church, 2016-18, was a joy. Their faithfulness to the church reflected their faithfulness to Jesus Christ. I am most grateful for his kind demeanor and support. His physical presence and lovely smile will surely be missed. My love to Mary and family.

John Wilkerson

**John Wilkerson** - November 12, 2019 at 06:43 PM