



## Billy Jefferson Fortner Jr.

June 15, 1952 - January 14, 2025

Billy Jefferson Fortner, Jr., 72, of Salisbury, NC passed away Tuesday, January 14, 2025 at Novant Health Rowan Regional Medical Center. Billy was born June 15, 1952 in Salisbury, NC to the late Billy Jefferson Fortner, Sr. and Velma Welch Fortner. He was a graduate of North Rowan High School Class of 1970 and of Rowan Cabarrus Community College in 1978. Billy was a Veteran of the U.S. Army from 1972-1978. He worked for Carolina Rubber Hose (later HBD Industries) as a General Foreman. Billy loved playing and listening to Bluegrass music; camping; fixing things; and above all, he loved his family.

Billy was a member of Oakdale Baptist Church.

In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his brother, Roger Fortner.

Left to cherish his memory is his wife of 54 years, Pamela Collins Fortner; son, Rodney Jefferson Fortner (Rebecca) of Salisbury, NC; daughter, Valerie Fortner Steelman (David) of Salisbury, NC; brother, Kenneth Ray Fortner (Sandy) of Memphis, TN; grandchildren: Alexander Fortner (Makayla), Conner Fortner (Olivia), Kristen Altman (Hunter), Andrew Sharpe and John Steelman; great-grandchildren: Elliott Fortner, Eleanor Altman, Archer Altman and Abraham Fortner.

The family will receive friends 2 -4 p.m. Sunday (January 19) at Gold Hill Wesleyan Church.

A graveside service will be conducted 10 a.m. Monday (Jan.20) at Salisbury

National Cemetery conducted by Rev. Mark Loman.

Summersett Funeral Home is serving the family. Online condolences may be made at [www.summersettfuneralhome.com](http://www.summersettfuneralhome.com).

# Cemetery Details

## Salisbury National Cemetery

501 Statesville Blvd.  
Salisbury, NC 28144

# Previous Events

## Visitation

JAN **19**. 2:00 PM - 4:00 PM (ET)

Gold Hill Wesleyan Church  
830 Liberty Road  
Gold Hill, NC 28071

## Graveside Service

JAN **20**. 10:00 AM (ET)

Salisbury National Cemetery  
501 Statesville Blvd.  
Salisbury, NC 28144

# Tribute Wall

“ I hate obituaries. My grandad wrote his himself when he preplanned his funeral during the pandemic. A few words couldn't begin to summarize him. If I could rewrite his obituary I don't think it would even encapsulate the amazing man he was. Words could never express the gravity of the loss our family feels. My grandad started working when he was 10 years old. His mother had left him and his two younger brothers with his dad. As the oldest, my Grandad took care of his younger brothers while his dad worked. He would always tell me how he was raised on pintos and cornbread, and maybe that's why to this day I love them so much. In his free time, my grandad delivered papers. He then went on for a short time working on a chicken farm where he developed a lifelong hatred of chickens. I can't say much about what happened, but he was chased by a chicken while trying to collect its eggs, and well, that was that.

My Grandad met my Nanny and fell in love. They weren't much older than 15. By 19 they were married and he was enlisted in the army. They had my dad and Nanny couldn't bare him being deployed away from her so the three of them moved to Germany until my dad was almost 2. They lived with a German family and that was enough until it wasn't. My aunt was born a few years later, and Nanny said she wasn't cut out for being an Army wife. I don't know the ifs, ands, or buts, but Grandad was honorably discharged from the army after an 8 year stint. And boy was he proud to have served his country, and that pride lasted his whole life. Grandad spent the next 42 years out at the Carolina Rubber Mill, which became HBD industry. He worked his way up to being a General Foreman nearly losing his pinky in the process. He worked 2nd shift and later 1st, allowing Nanny to stay at home and be the wonderful homemaker she is. He raised his two children with a firm, loving hand.

In the process he built his home with his two hands along with his cousin-more-brother, Bob. Somewhere along the way he developed a real, genuine talent for playing the guitar and even writing songs, as well as a deep love for Bluegrass. He loved making music on his “breaks” at work with his fiddle-playing best friend, Jim Bob. His love

*for music lasted his entire 72 years. Well, Rod met Becca, and Val met Dave and soon enough he would proudly tell you he had 3 grandsons and one granddaughter. After he was forced to retire, he would spend his days with little projects around all of our homes. He would paint walls, fix sinks, detail cars, install flooring, and create less than optimal engineering solutions to everyday mishaps. Including but not limited to: plastering a comb to a ruler and calling it a backscratcher, duct taping wood blocks together as furniture levelers or doorstops, and even building head boards with adequate shelving. He had a camper he restored time and time again and a truck he maintained to like new condition from 1994 on.*

*He taught us many things. One of the top lessons being that if you take care of things they last. Looking at his 54 year marriage, his truck, his home, his clothes, I would say that rings true. He took the best care of his grandchildren making them his best friends, and later even cared for their babies. He would again proudly tell you that along with his 3 grandsons and 1 granddaughter, he also had 3 great-grandsons and 1 great-granddaughter. He loved his kids and grandchildren more than life, and they loved him back equally or more.*

*His love language was definitely acts of service, from painting his girls toenails, covering us with blankets when cold, detailing our cars, fixing our homes, he sure loved loving us. We wish we could've taken care of him half as much as he took care of us. He had a real way of making anyone feel special, no matter who you were. He had a smile that lit up any room, the friendliest twinkles in his eyes, and he gave the best hugs. He taught us that if you say what you mean, and then say just kidding, that it would soften the blow. But most importantly he taught us unconditional love and how to work for what you have.*

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**Kristen Altman** - March 13, 2025 at 12:47 AM

KH

“ Kristen and Hunter purchased the Sacred Duty S  
pray for the family of Billy Jefferson Fortner Jr..



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**Kristen and Hunter** - January 16, 2025 at 10:38 PM

KF

“ Ken & Sandy Fortner & Family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in  
honor of Billy Jefferson Fortner Jr..

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**Ken & Sandy Fortner & Family** - January 16, 2025 at 02:04 PM

KF

“ Ken & Sandy Fortner & Family purchased the Be  
autiful in Blue for the family of Billy Jefferson  
Fortner Jr..



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**Ken & Sandy Fortner & Family** - January 16, 2025 at 02:04 PM



“ Sweet Tranquility Basket was purchased for the  
family of Billy Jefferson Fortner Jr..



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January 16, 2025 at 01:51 PM

HF

“ Thoughts and prayers to Rodney and Rebecca and their family. May your father rest in peace.

*Heather Fonte and family*

Heather Fonte - January 15, 2025 at 09:05 PM



“ Divine Peace Bouquet was purchased for the family of Billy Jefferson Fortner Jr..



January 15, 2025 at 07:56 PM

TR

“ Our condolences to the family prayers for all ❤️❤️ He was a great guy he will be missed

Treva Ridenhour - January 15, 2025 at 03:38 PM

LP

*No words. Our hearts hurt for your entire family.*

Linda Pierce - January 15, 2025 at 06:30 PM