



## Dr. James Willard Emerson

June 9, 1939 - January 16, 2016

James Willard Emerson, 76, of High Rock Lake, passed away on 16 Jan. 2016 at Duke Hospital from complications after heart surgery.

Born 9 June 1939 in Salisbury, North Carolina, he was the son of the late Frances Willard Emerson and Esther Barker Emerson. He was also preceded in death by his first wife of 35 years Sarah Holsclaw Emerson.

Jim graduated from Boyden High School with the class of 1957. He earned a degree in Biology from Catawba College in 1961, and a Master's Degree from Appalachian State University. He later earned a Doctorate in Education from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. He was also a graduate of the Harvard University JFK School of Government, as well as numerous Engineering, Chemical and Leadership schools. In 1982 Jim received the Distinguished Alumni Award from Catawba College.

His 31 years in public education included middle school science teacher, Principal of Sterling Elementary School and Olympic High School. At the senior high level Jim won recognition as one of the 60 most effective principals in the nation. He ended his career as an Area Superintendent in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School System. After retiring Jim helped to develop and later direct the STARBASE program for the state of North Carolina. Returning to Rowan County Jim served 8 years as a member and later

Chairman of the Rowan-Salisbury Board of Education.

Jim spent 44 years in the Army National Guard and US Army. He first joined the Guard at age 16 returning to finish his senior year of high school after summer basic training. Jim completed Infantry Officers' Candidate School at Ft. Benning, GA in 1964. He was an Engineer Officer with command assignments at the company, battalion, group and brigade level. In 1997 Major General Emerson was appointed Deputy Commanding General, Army National Guard, TRADOC at Ft. Monroe, Va. In 1999 he served the US Army with an appointment as the Deputy Chief of Staff for Education, TRADOC, Ft. Monroe, VA.

Major General Emerson's military decorations include the Distinguished Service Medal, the Legion of Merit, and the Meritorious Service Medal. He was also awarded the Army Engineer Order of the deFleuy Medal for professional excellence.

Dr. James Emerson received the Order of the Long Leaf Pine from Governor James Hunt.

In his later years Jim was an avid golfer who had 7 hole in ones. He enjoyed Beekeeping with his son. and fishing off his pier.

Those left to cherish his memory are his loving wife of 18 years, Bonnie Rufty Emerson and son Ike Emerson of the home. Jim's bonus children are Geof and Christine Wilson of Cary, Kemp and Heather Wilson of Ft. Stewart, Ga. , and grandchildren Claire, Sadie, and Oliver Wilson. Jim is also survived by his sister, Carolyn Emerson of Winston-Salem and numerous nieces and nephews.

Arrangements: Visitation at Summersett Funeral Home on Tuesday, 19 Jan.

From 6-8:00 PM.

Military burial on Wednesday, 20 Jan at 10:00 AM at the Historic National Cemetery, 202 Government Rd. (off South Main St.) followed at 11:00 by a memorial service at St. John's Lutheran Church, 200 West Innes St., Salisbury. The family will receive friends after the service at the church in Peeler Hall.

Memorials: In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to the N.C. National Guard Association Education Foundation, ATTN: Ken Tyndall, 7410 Chapel Hill Rd., Raleigh, NC 27607; or The American Heart Association, 4217 Park Place Court, Glen Allen, VA 23060-9979 or online at [heart.org](http://heart.org).

# Cemetery Details

## Old Historic U.S. National Cemetery

Salisbury, NC

# Previous Events

## Visitation

JAN 19. 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM (ET)

Summersett Funeral Home  
1315 W. Innes St.  
Salisbury, NC 28144  
(704) 633-2111  
<https://www.summersettfuneralhome.com>

## Graveside Service

JAN 20. 10:00 AM (ET)

Old Historic U.S. National Cemetery  
Salisbury, NC

# Tribute Wall

MB

“ *My deepest condolences to the family. I served under MG Emerson, he was an outstanding leader and patriot to this country and state. I am proud to have served with him over many years.*

*LTD (Retired) Mickey Bradley*

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**Mickey Bradley** - January 25, 2016 at 10:01 AM

JF

“ *So sorry for your loss. Our thoughts and prayers are with you.*

*The Ames Flynn family*

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**Jennifer Flynn** - January 22, 2016 at 09:08 AM

CR

“ *Jim was one of the finest men and fairest administrators that Charlotte-Mecklenburg has ever had. All of our children attended Olympic High School and always considered Jim as a friend as well as their Principal. I considered it an honor when he came to my retirement party and brought his bride and remember how proud he was to show off Ike. All of the Richey children were so sad to hear of your loss. We all will continue to remember Jim and certainly his family at this time.*

*With much love and our prayers, Carolyn & M Mike Richey*

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**Carolyn & Mike Richey** - January 21, 2016 at 02:35 PM

CP

“ One of the best principals I worked with in my 40 year teaching career was Jim Emerson! This belief is supported by his many accomplishments, especially those in education. We lost a true patriot, educator, and community advocate. Dr. Emerson had a positive impact on the lives of so many young people at OHS, including my son. Know that he made a profound and worthwhile difference in his time with us. My deepest sympathy to his family. You are in my thoughts and prayers.

Constance Pawlowski  
Charlotte, NC

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Constance Pawlowski - January 20, 2016 at 01:31 PM

SK

“ Our thoughts and prayers are with you and Ike during this time and may God's comfort bring Peace to you. May you know that the "Point" will miss him dearly and his quick wit he shared with us. Always a kind word towards us and most of all he found our Mystery. God Bless you and your family. The "Point" won't be the same without the General.

Bruce & Sue

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Susan Kerschner - January 19, 2016 at 03:58 PM

GS

“ Our thoughts and prayers are with you and your family. We had the pleasure to get to know you and Dr. Emerson when our grandson Logan Shuping played tennis with Ike at Erwin. It was a pleasure to get to know you and Dr. Emerson. You were always so pleasant and friendly to us. He will be greatly missed by all who knew and loved him. Our prayers are also with Ike. May God give you all strength to get through this very difficult time. Your memories will always be with you which we pray will comfort you. God be with you. Gilbert and Joyce Sprinkle

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**Gilbert Sprinkle** - January 19, 2016 at 02:27 PM

BH

“ I have know Jim Emerson since our days at Catawba College. His then girlfriend (later wife) was my best friend our junior and senior years. Jim came to my rescue one day at the first day of second semester when I accidentally showed up with no notebook, no pen or pencil, no purse, and no money. Thanks to him I was able to purchase what I needed to get me through that first day of new classes. He was a good friend and will be missed by all those on whom he had been such an influence. My sympathy to Bonnie and Ike--remember the good times. Barbara Howard

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**Barbara P. Howard** - January 19, 2016 at 01:44 PM

O'

“ OHS Class of '80 purchased the Sacred Duty Spray for the family of Dr. James Willard Emerson.



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**OHS Class of '80** - January 19, 2016 at 11:25 AM

BG

“ *Mr. Emerson will always be one of the most influential leaders of our youth. We were blessed to have him as our principal and friend. From the OHS Class of '80.*

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**Beth Anne (Holesh) Gibbons** - January 19, 2016 at 10:21 AM

VI

“ *Always knew we were leaded by greatness just did not realize what this wonderful principal of ours had accomplished in his life. Why because he came across as a humble man. Never knew he was so accomplished.... he could have done anything however he choose to guide us at Olympic High School and we were blessed to know him. Prayers for his family. Vicky Efird Knight 1980 OHS*

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**vicky** - January 19, 2016 at 08:27 AM

RD

“ *Mr. Emerson (as I knew him) was assistant principal at South Mecklenburg High School. He was tough! I know because I had many a run-in with him as a wild teenager. I thought he was a hard-ass. I later drove a school bus to Sterling Elementary and was struck by the site of scads of elementary kids running up to him and hugging him and hanging on to him and the obvious delight on his face.*

*Rest in peace to a fine man.*

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**robert dulin** - January 19, 2016 at 08:05 AM

BP

“ First of all, our condolences to your family. My wife came to me after supper and showed me Mr. Emerson's obituary. We saw his name plain as day and said this must be a relative of "the" Mr. Emerson from Smith Junior High school and Olympic. I never realized he was so young when I was at Smith..if you were older than me, you were old. We were just so shocked and saddened. He was a great person with a wonderful demeanor. I always remembered his being in the National Guard. Just a really fine man.

*Bill and Kay Pippin  
Belmont, NC*

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**Bill and Kay Pippin** - January 18, 2016 at 07:50 PM

MI

“ Mrs. Emerson, I am so sorry to read of the death of your husband. Losing a loved one is never easy to deal with. Our Heavenly Father assures us that He cares for each one of us. May you experience His loving care moving through these days of bereavement.

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**Minnie** - January 18, 2016 at 06:09 PM

LR

“ So very sorry to hear this. Prayers to the Emerson family. He was a great man.  
~Linda McCrorie Reeves OHS Class of '88



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**Linda Reeves** - January 18, 2016 at 05:35 PM

LS

“ MG Emerson was always "out front" as an educator and was the face of Olympic High School for many years. He set the example for all. You and your family remain in our thoughts and prayers. Lt Col Mike Schwartz, USAFR (OHS '87)

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**Lt Col Mike Schwartz** - January 18, 2016 at 10:58 AM

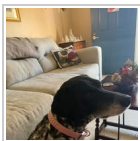
FT

“ Sincere Condolences To The Emerson Family, I hope you have peace, comfort and strength to face the days ahead. And loving memories to carry you through this sad time. "For everything there is an appointed time, even...a time to weep." Ecclesiastes 3:1,4. With Comfort & Loving-Kindness,



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**F. Taylor** - January 18, 2016 at 10:23 AM



“ Cheryl Sjoblom lit a candle in memory of Dr. James Willard Emerson



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**Cheryl Sjoblom** - January 18, 2016 at 08:58 AM

MF

“ *Bonnie and family,  
I am very sorry for your loss. I will always cherish the years that I served with General Emerson in the NC National Guard. My thoughts and prayers are with you and your family at this time of loss.*  
*CSM (retired) Michael Forester*

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**Michael Forester** - January 17, 2016 at 04:55 PM