



## Jack Wilton Birkner

October 7, 1928 - October 17, 2023

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On Tuesday morning, October 17, Jack Wilton Birkner, 95, passed away peacefully, surrounded by the loving family who cherished him throughout his time on Earth.

A native of Bay City, Texas, Jack was the fourth of eight children (4 boys and 4 girls) born at home to Joseph Adolf Birkner and wife Mabel Green Birkner. His father owned a dairy business, and the Birkner family earned the reputation of caring for people in need across all socioeconomic backgrounds. He attained a strong work ethic early, having farmed and later on worked in the family's lumber yard business in Bay City.

Faith was an important part of Jack's life growing up and included regular Sunday morning worship. During his high school years in Bay City, he would come to have the friendship of a lovely young woman and fellow church member, Mary Lou Quinn, who was three years younger in school. Spare time was enjoyed playing football on his high school team. Jack's participation in 4H and skill in showing livestock in County Fairs found him with the Grand Champion Jersey Heifer at the 1946 Houston Livestock Show.

After graduation from Bay City High School, Jack came to Texas A&M where he joined the Corps of Cadets and earned funds for his college education following another family tradition of brick masons; his assignments included

laying brick building family homes in a newly growing city of College Station. He earned his B.S. degree in Dairy Husbandry in 1951.

On the occasion of one small break in his studies, his hometown friend, Mary Lou, was in the Queen's Court at the annual Rice Festival, and she asked him if he would escort her. Without hesitation, Jack replied "Yes!" From that event, Jack viewed his friend in new eyes; romantic pursuit ensued. The couple were married on August 5, 1951.

After college, Jack was commissioned in the U.S. Army and was assigned to Ft. Knox, Kentucky. In 1953, the couple was blessed by the birth of their first child, Dolores Kay. In March that same year, Lt. Birkner set sail from San Francisco for the Korean War front on the USS Anderson. With final transportation by train, the young Lieutenant was assigned as a platoon leader to the 7th division Infantry Regiment, and he experienced the true ravages of battle on a site known as Pork Chop Hill.

Critically wounded on his first day in the battle zone, during the height of a major offensive from the Chinese, Lt. Birkner had been prayed over by a Catholic Chaplain after being helicoptered to a nearby MASH unit.

Communications and medical updates were not at today's standards, so his young wife received a cryptic telegram from the Army Adjutant General, expressing the minimum information that Jack was seriously wounded in action in battle, and an address where mail could be sent to him. The medical treatment he required included treatment at Tokyo Army Hospital, followed by Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio. It was poignant that his flight to San Antonio over the Golden Gate Bridge was four months to the day of his flight over that same bridge en route to San Francisco. Medical treatment continued for broken bones and substantial internal damage. Following numerous surgeries, bone grafts, and healing. Jack received his permanent disability discharge in 1954, and received commendations for his bravery, leadership, and service including the Purple Heart, the Korean Service Medal, the United Nations Service Medal, and the National Defense Service Medal. Despite the substantive injuries he sustained, he and Mary Lou never

perceived him as disabled, because he was always doing something for others, busy about helping people in their church, neighborhood, and community, to which they were faithfully devoted. His deep personal faith formed the structure by which he viewed life and raised his family to trust in God throughout their lives, and he embodied that faith.

His post military career included working as an assistant County Agent in Wharton County, followed by a position with Tide Agricultural Products (today known as Wilbur-Ellis) in El Campo, where he was a branch manager for 26 years. Following retirement there, Jack became a full-time farmer for 17 years. Not content to rest on his laurels, he earned his real estate license and practiced for many years. Additionally, he worked with C.E. Muegge for another ten years.

Jack and Mary Lou have four children, Dolores Kay Cole (husband Larry) of Hillsboro, TX; Jack Wilton Birkner, Jr. (wife Stephanie) of New Braunfels, TX; Marla Jean Menard (husband Tracy) of Rosharon, TX, and Patricia Lynn Lampley (husband Jim) of Bryan, TX.

Eleven grandchildren and 22 great-grandchildren complete their legacy, including Camile Cole Pfluger (husband August) and their children, Vivian, Caroline, and Juliana; Leigh Cole Morosowski (husband Igor) and their daughter, Gigi; and Melissa Cole Richter (husband Carl) and their children Heidi, Cara, and Sam; Bond Birkner (wife Olya); Adrian Menard and children Noah, Elijah, and Harper; Haley Menard Sebree (husband Kyle) and their children Maizy and Ellery; and Quinn Menard (Bob Briscoe); Jamie Lampley Barton (husband Darrin) and their children Blair, Brielynn, and Berkley; Chrissy Lampley Payne (husband Justin) and their children Kase and Levi; Kaitlyn Lampley Colson (husband Craig) and their children Mattilynn, Alan, Joanna, and Miriam; and Layne Lampley Beasley (husband Shane) and their son Wade.

Family gatherings were key in Jack's life with multiple generations gathering regularly over 50 years at the family deer lease at the Lockhart Ranch in

Camp Wood, Texas. Four generations enjoyed these annual rituals and created lifetime memories and bonding that brought multiple families together forever in laughter, love, and life lessons.

Jack's years beyond retirement with Mary Lou found them busy every day, whether spending time with family or working as a dynamic duo to improve something in their beloved community of El Campo. They cherished their friends and neighbors with whom they spent much time. The Birkners were committed, faithful members of The First Christian Church of El Campo, and Jack was an elder and served on many committees for many years.

He was a long time member of the Lions Club, where he served in numerous leadership roles. Jack was a life member of the American Legion and served as Commander for six years, in addition to participating in activities that paid tribute to veterans who had passed away. As a Charter Member of the Wharton County Fair Association, Jack enjoyed coaching dairy cattle shows for his 4H students.

Representative of the feelings of all the second generation, two granddaughters shared

"Poppy was such a good, good man, one who embodied the composure of what I imagine Jesus carried—gentle, humble, so kind, always self-controlled. He loved us so deeply and it was known. Poppy led with willingness, an attitude of hard work and contentment...the rich blessing is ours to have been loved by him...My heart hurts so much but is also filled with gratitude for all the years we had with him, the memories we shared, the treasured moments together, the lessons of love, family, and friendship, the songs (good and bad!), the deep love that Poppy had for each of us, and for the kindness of God to bring him Home. Poppy is truly a gift, one of a kind and irreplaceable. We are so blessed."

Jack left this world on October 17th, peacefully, in his sleep. He was preceded in death by his parents, Joseph and Mabel Birkner, brothers Joe, Jr., and wife Dorothy; Otha "Skeet" and wife Melba; Otis "Butch" and wife Doris; sister Mabel Wakefield, father and mother-in-law Sam and Fern Quinn, of Bay City,

TX; brother-in-law and wife, Rex and Margie Quinn, all of Bay City, TX, and sister-in-law and husband Bill and Sammie Wright of Richmond, TX; brothers-in-law, Larry Kiesling and Robert Klein.

Survivors include Mary Lou Birkner, his wife of 72 years, of El Campo, sisters, Mary Kiesling of Kenedy, TX, Anna Ruth Klein of Tomball, TX, and Kathy and Richard Stevens of Fort Worth, TX; cousin, Kenneth Birkner of San Antonio; children, Kay and Larry Cole, Jack and Stephanie Birkner, Marla and Tracy Menard, and Patty and Jim Lampley; 11 grandchildren and spouses, Camille (August) Pfluger of San Angelo, TX, Leigh (Igor) Morosowski of Arlington, VA, Melissa (Carl) Richter of Aledo, TX, Bond (Olya) Birkner of Monterey, CA, Adrian Menard of League City, TX, Haley (Kylle) Sebree of Carlsbad, CA, Quinn Menard (Bob Briscoe) of Alvin, TX, Jamie (Darrin) Barton of Cypress, TX, Chrissy (Justin) Payne of League City, TX, Kaitlyn (Craig) Colson of College Station, TX and Layne (Shane) Beasley of Hico, TX; 22 great-grandchildren (and 2 more on the way), and a host of very special nieces, nephews, and close friends.

Visitation will begin on Saturday, October 21, at The First Christian Church of El Campo. Funeral services will begin at 10 a.m. with the Rev. Rick DuBroc and Rev. Adraylle Watson officiating. Graveside services will begin at 2 p.m. Saturday at Roselawn Memorial Park in Van Vleck. Pallbearers will be Tom Dennis, Glenn Emshoff, Tom Kana, Dan Kyle, James Kyle, Clark Kyle, Jimmy Roppolo, and Scott Strelec. Honorary pallbearers will be Grady Allen, Allen Collins, Lance Lurker, Leon Macha, Pete Martin, Eric Muegge, Melvin Rasmussen, Layton Raun, JC Bouse, Son-in-laws, Grandsons and Grandsons-in-law. Arrangements are in the care of Triska Funeral Home in El Campo.

# Previous Events

## Visitation

OCT **21**. 9:00 AM (CT)

First Christian Church  
205 W. West St.  
El Campo, TX 77437

## Funeral Service

OCT **21**. 10:00 AM (CT)

First Christian Church  
205 W. West St.  
El Campo, TX 77437

## Graveside Service

OCT **21**. 2:00 PM (CT)

Roselawn Memorial Park  
1 Mile South of Van Vleck on FM 2540  
Van Vleck, TX 77482

# Tribute Wall

SJ

“ *Patty I am so sorry for your family's loss. Eternal rest grant unto him and may the perpetual light shine upon him. May the Angels of God meet him and present his soul to God. May he rest in Eternal peace until you are together again 🙏*



Susan Janacek - October 22, 2023 at 08:08 PM

PT

“ *Pat Taylor lit a candle in memory of Jack Wilton Birkner*



Pat Taylor - October 22, 2023 at 01:36 PM

JG

“ *Hard to find a better example of a life well lived...a man of principle who respected and was respected, serving with humility and grace. As Bum Phillips said about Earl "He may not be in a class by himself, but it don't take long to call roll"*

James Gerberman - October 21, 2023 at 10:25 AM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Jack Wilton Birkner.*



October 20, 2023 at 03:13 PM

MB

“ Anyone who ever met Jack was his new best friend. His personality just made one feel so special. I was blessed to call him my friend. There are so many stories of him juggling cars in the drive when all the kids were home to visit, getting the camp house ready for a weekend get-together, making sure feed and hay was in the barn when he knew horses were coming with the kids to ride. He just took care of everyone and everything. He was a kind, loving Christian man who was admired and loved by so many. A life well lived and so loved. I know I did. Toodie Brady

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**Maureen Brady** - October 19, 2023 at 06:36 PM

PL

“ 4 files added to the album Family



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**Patty Lampley** - October 19, 2023 at 02:39 AM

FK

*Mary Lou and Jack. A true love story.*

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**Frances Kyle** - October 20, 2023 at 05:07 PM

CR

“ *Cindy Riha lit a candle in memory of Jack Wilton Birkner*



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**Cindy Riha** - October 18, 2023 at 11:58 PM

RU

“ *Ruthie purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of Jack Wilton Birkner.*



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**Ruthie** - October 18, 2023 at 07:09 PM

DB

“ *Don B. planted a grove of 3 [Memorial Trees](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Jack Wilton Birkner.*

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**Don B.** - October 18, 2023 at 06:30 PM

RE

“ *Rhonda Edmonds lit a candle in memory of Jack Wilton Birkner*



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**Rhonda Edmonds** - October 18, 2023 at 05:44 PM

BR

“ *Bennie And Patsy Reck lit a candle in memory of Jack Wilton Birkner*



**bennie and patsy reck** - October 18, 2023 at 01:29 PM

SP

“ *Shirley Popp lit a candle in memory of Jack Wilton Birkner*



**Shirley Popp** - October 18, 2023 at 12:28 PM

CT

“ *Carol Tomlinson lit a candle in memory of Jack Wilton Birkner*



**Carol Tomlinson** - October 18, 2023 at 10:17 AM

MS

“ *Mrs Birkner, Kay, Jack, Marla, and Patty, deepest condolences from the Strarup family.*

*Mr. Birkner was a great man and he will be missed by all who knew him.*



**Martin Strarup** - October 18, 2023 at 09:19 AM

GS

“ Gaylon and Tanya Shenkir purchased the Medium Dish Garden for the family of Jack Wilton Birkner.



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**Gaylon and Tanya Shenkir** - October 18, 2023 at 09:18 AM

GS

“ Gaylon and Tanya Shenkir planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Jack Wilton Birkner.

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**Gaylon and Tanya Shenkir** - October 18, 2023 at 09:18 AM

SC

“ Dear Birkner family,  
It is with a heavy heart that I offer my heartfelt sympathy to you at this difficult time. Mr. Birkner was a kind man of honor and service. He served God, he served his country, he served his community, and he served as an excellent example of a loving husband and family man. Mr. Birkner was a true Christian gentleman and we are richer for having known him. May memories of happier times comfort you in the days ahead, and may God grant you His loving peace.



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**Sandra Cranek** - October 18, 2023 at 09:12 AM



“ *Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Jack Wilton Birkner.*



October 18, 2023 at 07:59 AM



“ *Patrick Marek lit a candle in memory of Jack Wilton Birkner*



**Patrick Marek** - October 18, 2023 at 06:51 AM



“ *My heart hurts at the loss of Jack Birkner, he is everything that was written in his obituary. I had the privilege of attending church with his family and calling him friend. He will be missed because of the way he lived his life. God bless you and I thank you for your wonderful example of charity. May God surround the Birkner family with His comforting arms and give them comfort in their loss. I sure love y'all.*  
*Melody Bacak*

**Melody Bacak** - October 18, 2023 at 12:59 AM



“ *Lu Matzke lit a candle in memory of Jack Wilton Birkner*



**Lu Matzke** - October 17, 2023 at 09:15 PM

DS

“ *David & Charlene Linhart Smith lit a candle in memory of Jack Wilton Birkner*



David & Charlene Linhart Smith - October 17, 2023 at 02:45 PM

JS

“ *Julie Strnadel sent a virtual gift in memory of Jack Wilton Birkner*



Julie Strnadel - October 17, 2023 at 01:51 PM

JA

*Patty and families...I am so sorry for your loss of your wonderful dad. Sending hugs and prayers to all the Birkners.*

Jean Andersen - October 17, 2023 at 01:56 PM

TK

*Mr. Jack Birkner handed me my El Campo High School diploma in 1976 alongside Jack. Jr. and Marla. I got to know Mr. Jack and Mrs. Mary Lou in 2013 attending church with them at First Christian. They are the like second parents to me. I love them both and Mr. Jack will be truly missed. All there children are great people. What a beautiful example of what family. Tom Kana*

Tom Kana - October 17, 2023 at 03:38 PM

JB

*Mary Lou and Family: Jack was a wonderful person, and such a pleasure to have had him as a friend, especially when the topic was Texas A and M. May he RIP.*

Jim and Nancy Brooks - October 17, 2023 at 09:36 PM

PB

*All the Birkner's were great! That can only be attributed to fine parents and parenting. I have so muc respect for Jack and Mary Lou Birkner.*

**Paul Bacak** - October 18, 2023 at 01:47 AM

KT

*Patty and families. My condolences on the loss of your father. I know this man meant the world to you and by all accounts his life was a life well-lived. May your memories of him keep him in your heart, and the love of family and friends be your comfort at this sad time.*

**Karen Thompson** - October 18, 2023 at 09:57 AM

GD

*Mary Lou, you could write a book on how to be a perfect wife, you have been one to Jack. Your love and dedication has been beautiful to witness for the many years I've known you and your sweet family. I'm unable to be there in person but am with you in Spirit. God will wrap you His arms and never leave you. Hugs and Prayers to all..*

**Gloria Dowden** - October 18, 2023 at 10:31 AM

DB

*Mary Lou and 'kids', Uncle Jack was one of my first and best models for what kind of person I should aspire to be. My earliest memory of him was when he was at Grandmother and Grandpa Birkner's house at a family gathering still in a body cast from being wounded in Korea. He was always such a fine, honorable, loving, and kind man, and he made me proud to be a Birkner. I know nothing can compare to what he meant to you that were his immediate and much-loved family, but also know that he meant so much to those of us who were in his wider extended circle. What a life well-lived and well-loved. Don Birkner (nephew)*

**Don Birkner** - October 18, 2023 at 04:06 PM