



## Ralph E. Branham

September 29, 1939 - February 28, 2025

In Loving Memory of Ralph E. Branham

MSGT USAF Retired

Ralph E. Branham, age 85, of Highland, IL, passed away peacefully surrounded by the love of his family at his home on Friday, February 28, 2025. Though his absence leaves an emptiness in many hearts, there is great comfort in knowing that he is reunited with his beloved wife, Bertella "Bert" Branham, whom he deeply cherished throughout their 60 years of marriage. Their love was built on faith, laughter, and unwavering devotion—a bond that will continue to inspire all who knew them.

Born on September 29, 1939, in Newport, KY, Ralph was the son of Benjamin and Dolly (nee Walters) Branham. He grew up in the rolling hills of Kentucky and graduated from Frenchburg High School in 1958 before embarking on a life of service and adventure.

Ralph dedicated 21 years to the United States Air Force, serving with honor and integrity from 1959 to 1980. His career took him across the country and around the world, with duty stations including Lackland AFB, TX; Bitburg AFB, Germany; Barksdale AFB, LA; Thailand; Wurtsmith AFB, Michigan; Puerto Rico; and Scott AFB, IL. He retired as a Master Sergeant, leaving a legacy of dedication, sacrifice, and love for his country. Following his decorated military career, he dedicated another twenty plus years to the United States Army Civil Service.

After his military career, Ralph built his life around his faith, family, and community. He could be described as a very special man who was easy to love and never met a stranger. He was a proud member of the First Baptist Church in Highland, IL, he was guided by his faith and shared God's love with others. He also found camaraderie and purpose in VFW Post 5694 and American Legion Post 439, where he served as Chaplain and honored his fellow veterans as a Bugler for the Military Honor Guard.

To know Ralph was to know a man filled with warmth, kindness, humor, and a deep

devotion to his loved ones. His grandchildren and great-grandchildren were his greatest joy, and he never missed an opportunity to cheer them on—whether at a soccer game, baseball field, dance recital, or gymnastics competition. He found endless happiness traveling with his daughter Sonja and her husband, Jim, especially trips to the beach and back home to Kentucky for class reunions.

Ralph loved life's simple pleasures. He had a notorious sweet tooth, never turning down a good dessert, biscuits and gravy, or his famous sweet tea—made with “a little bit of tea with his sugar.” He took immense pride in his bright red Camaro convertible, often taking joyrides just for the thrill of it. Kentucky always held a special place in his heart—not just for family and friends but also for his unwavering passion for University of Kentucky basketball, proudly declaring blue as his favorite color. And when it came to baseball, nothing rivaled his love for the St. Louis Cardinals.

Ralph's legacy is one of love, service, and unwavering devotion to his family, friends, and country. He leaves a lifetime of cherished memories for all who knew and loved him. Though no longer with us in body, his spirit lives on in the stories we share, the traditions we uphold, and the love he instilled in all of us.

Ralph is survived by two sons and a daughter: Ralph Anthony "Tony" Branham of Kings Mountain, NC, Mark Owen (Karla Kay) Branham of Wentzville, MO, and Sonja M. (James) Woolford of Highland, IL. His brother Daniel Branham of Newport, KY and his sister-in-law Brenda Faye Thompson of Mt. Sterling, KY.

Grandchildren: Justin Branham of Ballwin, MO; Corry (Danielle) Branham of Kings Mountain, NC; Charles Grimes of Kings Mountain, NC; Mark E. Branham (Jodi) of Troy, MO; Krystal (David) Hagerman of Mulvane, KS; Matt (Cailan Williams) Branham of Hannibal, MO; Mike (Jaclyn) Branham of Moscow Mills, MO; Kandyce (Aaron) Bergmann of Belleville, IL; Kameryn Branham of Wentzville, MO; Brandy (Logan) Purk, St. Louis, MO; Courtney (Eric) Heyen, Troy, IL; and Alli (Brian) Henderson, Saint Jacob, IL.

Great Grandchildren: Peyton, Connor, Viviann Branham; Kelton, Kane Grimes; Parker, Ayla Branham; Eastyn, Cameron Hagerman; Addy Williams; Mack, Briella, Braylee Branham; Lucas, Owen Bergmann; Oliver, Rory, Sadie Heyen; and Brently, Jaxen, Ella Faye Henderson.

Ralph was preceded in death by his wife, Bertella “Bert” Branham, his parents, Benjamin and Dolly Branham, Daughter-In-Law, Kelly S. Branham (nee Quayle), siblings, Virgil Branham, James Branham, Sharon Ann Records, and Granddaughter, Jessica Grimes.

Arrangements are being handled by Spengel-Boulanger Funeral Home in Highland, IL. Visitation will be held Wednesday, March 5, 2025, from 4pm to 7pm and Thursday, March 6, 2025 from 8am to 10am with service at 10am. Rev. Cody Knapik, First Baptist Church of Highland, IL, officiating. Visitation and services will be held at Spengel-Boulanger Funeral Home in Highland, IL.

Interment will be at Lake View Memorial Gardens in Fairview Heights, IL.

Memorial contributions may be made to: VFW Post 5694, American Legion Post 493, or Highland Food Pantry (all located in Highland, Illinois).

# Previous Events

## Visitation

MAR 5. 4:00 PM - 7:00 PM (CT)

Spengel-Boulanger Funeral Home - Highland  
1501 9th Street  
P.O. Box 187  
Highland, IL 62249  
(618) 654-2133  
info@spengel-boulanger.com

## Morning Visitation

MAR 6. 8:00 AM - 10:00 AM (CT)

Spengel-Boulanger Funeral Home - Highland  
1501 9th Street  
P.O. Box 187  
Highland, IL 62249  
(618) 654-2133  
info@spengel-boulanger.com

## Funeral Service

MAR 6. 10:00 AM (CT)

Spengel-Boulanger Funeral Home - Highland  
1501 9th Street  
P.O. Box 187  
Highland, IL 62249  
(618) 654-2133  
info@spengel-boulanger.com

# Tribute Wall

DH

“ DeLores Hovermale lit a candle in memory of Ralph Branham



DeLores Hovermale - March 20, 2025 at 01:03 PM

DH

“ Ralph was a very special friend and class mate. Always jolly and lots of fun. We will miss you at our class reunions but will visit up yonder.

DeLores Hovermale - March 20, 2025 at 01:03 PM



“ A grove of 3 [Memorial Trees](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Ralph E. Branham.

March 04, 2025 at 06:10 PM

BI

“ bioMerieux purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Ralph E. Branham.



bioMerieux - March 04, 2025 at 10:20 AM

TB

“ The RSM team at BioMerieux. purchased the Sentiments of Serenity Spray for the family of Ralph E. Branham.



The RSM team at BioMerieux. - March 03, 2025 at 10:58 AM

TB

“ The RSM team at BioMerieux. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Ralph E. Branham.

The RSM team at BioMerieux. - March 03, 2025 at 10:58 AM