



## John Willis VanValkenburg

July 21, 1930 - February 10, 2024

John Willis VanValkenburg passed away on February 10, 2024. He was born in Fulton County, Ohio on July 21, 1930 the son of Willie Lee and Ethel Ratcliff VanValkenburg. On August 28, 1951 he married Joyce Williamson in Morenci, Michigan and she survives. Also surviving are his daughter, Julie Garrett of Prattville; and son, John Craig (Gretchen) VanValkenburg of Auburn, Alabama. Grandchildren, Carolene McKibbin of Prattville, Cecil (Amber) Compton of North Carolina and Heidi VanValkenburg of Oregon; four great-grandchildren; four great, great grandchildren and many nieces and nephews.

John was a graduate of Morenci High School. He attended the University of New Mexico, Toledo University and the University of South Dakota and received two degrees from Adrian College and also a Master's degree from Michigan State University. He was a 32nd degree Mason, 32nd degree Scottish Rite and a Shriner along with Sigma Tau Delta, Alabama Archaeology Society Board of Directors and many other organizations.

He served four years in the United States Air Force during the Korean War being stationed on Guam, Okinawa and in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Dr. VanValkenburg also served as Vice President of three institutions of Higher Education. He was also on state committees under three different Governors in the State of Alabama. Governor George Wallace appointed him as Honorary Lieutenant Colonel Aide-de-Camp in State of Alabama. He served

as a consultant to the State Prison System of Alabama in regard to Indian affairs. Joyce and he created the Orange Beach United Methodist Church. He also created the Orange Beach Indian and Sea Museum. Morenci, Michigan has named a room in their museum the Dr. John and Joyce VanValkenburg "Indian Heritage Room" as a result of their donations.

The cities of Montevallo, Morenci and Orange Beach honored him as a Citizen of the Year. John's academic and Fund-Raising interests including him speaking at many national conferences in Washington, Chicago and Duke University to name a few. For five years he wrote an article each week for the Gulf Coast Newspapers entitled "Out Indian Heritage."

He was preceded in death by their daughter, Joni VanValkenburg Jones; his parents; two brothers, Francis and William; and four sisters, Florence VanValkenburg, Doris Smith, Dorothea O'Brien and Cynthia Allion.

John has elected to be cremated and his remains will be buried in Oak Grove in Morenci, Michigan.

# Tribute Wall

JB

“*Dr. Van will definitely be missed. He was a true inspiration. Dr. Van shared his wisdom to all who would listen. He wrote poems about those who he treasured. Our admiration for each other was unquestionable. He wrote a Jab poem. He carved an intricate walking cane for my students at Wilcox Central HS. Many times He was a quiet storm because God gave him visions about so much in life. He was a humble giant. He was always capable of doing so much more than time would allow. God has called him home now. Bless you , Dr. Van, and thank you for the magnificent impressions you have made during your book of life. Well done!!! Jab Brown*

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**Jab Brown** - February 15, 2024 at 09:34 AM



*Dr. Van was a fabulous individual. While having attained many accomplishments in academia, he enjoyed wood working and writing as hobbies. He always expressed the best in others and looked to build up each individual. Dr. Van regularly took the time to send letters of encouragement and made each person feel special. Many people remember being honored by having him unexpectedly present them with a hand carved walking/hiking stick. He will be greatly missed.*

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**Steve Ricks** - February 20, 2024 at 07:03 PM