



Gordon "Rex" Willnow

September 2, 1929 - January 21, 2016

ADRIAN--Born in Adrian, Michigan on September 2, 1929 to Donna and Gordon Willnow, who preceded him in death. Rex is survived by his wife Arlene (Callahan), whom he married in 1954, his son Steve "Yogi" (Licia), his daughter Jodi, his grandson Alex—the light of his life, and his half-brother Harlan (Sue) of Jasper, Michigan.

Rex graduated from Adrian High School in 1947, from Michigan State University in 1951, and he was discharged from the US Army in 1953, where he served in the Counter Intelligence Corp. After several years selling insurance, he got a Master's degree in Special Education from Eastern Michigan University.

Most of his working years were spent at the Porter Center, then he moved on from there to start a program at VoTech that helped to ensure that all students, including those with special challenges, find their capacity to earn a living and to contribute to the community. While at the Porter Center, he was instrumental in starting the Michigan Special Olympics, which were held in Lenawee County for several years. Rex never let any grass grow under his feet— he was an accomplished marksman with pistols and bow-and-arrow, he played and coached fast-pitch softball, coached little league baseball, he played and taught tennis, he was a devoted runner qualifying for the Boston marathon, played handball and paddleball for many years, took up roller

blading and bicycling, and up until about two months before his passing, he was a non-stop golfer (hitting balls and hunting for balls).

Rex was a big believer in community involvement. He was past-president of Adrian Kiwanis Club, and he served as a volunteer deputy for the Lenawee County Sheriff Department for many years. Recently, Rex retired after 25 years with the Adrian High School football team as the equipment manager, where he touched the lives of many young men by nurturing, mentoring, and caring for them. Always needing something to keep himself busy, Rex started his own snow-removal business that he built to great personal success.

According to Rex's wishes, he has been cremated and there will be a Celebration of Life on Sunday, January 31, 2016 from 2–5pm at the Lenawee Country Club. Rex requested "casual attire" for this celebration.

A special thank you goes to Hospice of Lenawee, Cambrian Memory Care in Tecumseh, and to all who helped him and the family in any way. Everyone who knew Rex was affected by his sense of "others." He had a genuine spirit, a caring and helpful attitude, and a smile for everyone he encountered. Rex will be sorely missed by all.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests contributions be made to Hospice of Lenawee or to Adrian Public Schools Athletics—In Memory of Rex Willnow. Envelopes are available at the funeral home. Arrangements entrusted to Wagley Funeral Home where online condolences and memories may be shared at www.WagleyFuneralHome.com.

Tribute Wall



“ *Gordon "Rex" Willnow*

January 28, 2023 at 12:24 PM



“ *Rex gave me a pair of handball gloves when I was playing racketball one day and said "try this game. I played handball for 20 years. We played and ran many tournaments together. Those were great times. I also helped get Civitan involved with Special Olympics with Rex. Rex was a man to be respected. . . . And I always did.*
Jim Jones

James Jones - January 31, 2016 at 09:46 AM



“ *I am blessed to have known Rex! I appreciate his friendship and how he was always encouraging us. Thinking of Rex takes me back to all the guys who grew up in the Airport Section way back when. He mentored all of us! Lots of fun! Big hugs for Arlene, Yog, and Jodi....*

Mark, Cindy, Colin, and Jacob Caggiano

Mark Caggiano - January 30, 2016 at 10:30 AM



“ *Think of you and your family. I didn't know Rex but I know Steve, his son. I bet Steve got his kindness from his dad based off of the other comments. I hope your family finds peace. Heather*

Heather and Matt Rick-Burnett - January 25, 2016 at 09:38 AM

GG

“ *What a privilege to have known Rex, especially the days of playing fast pitch softball. He always had a good word and was a great friend. My love and prayers to you Arlene and your family. Gary Garrison in NC*

Gary Garrison - January 25, 2016 at 08:29 AM

MR

“ *What a wonderful man whom never knew a stranger! His loving manner to all the children was a living tribute to his memory & his sporting activities were amazing. RIP Rex!*

Margie Reed - January 24, 2016 at 04:41 PM

BG

“ *Arlene, Yogi, (Licia) Jodi & Alex*

Rex's journey in life ends on earth but his new journey begins in heaven with our Lord. When I think of Rex he was a man who loved his family. Rex was a great role model to all young people and a man of integrity. Growing up I most remember the patience he showed to me as my little league coach. I also remember Rex followed us as young men and again was our coach as we played fast pitch softball. I treasure the memories growing up around the Willnow's . Yogi served as best man in my wedding and I also remember Rex & Arlene being a part of that day. Our thoughts and prayers will be with you all.

Brian & Connie Gentner

Brian and Connie Gentner - January 23, 2016 at 06:10 PM

MC

I agree Brian! It brings back great memories about growing up in the Airport Section. I remember Rex coaching us in basketball at Prairie School and of course fast pitch softball. It was great fun and wonderful memories! Mark Caggiano

Mark Caggiano - January 30, 2016 at 10:19 AM

JM

*“ I have very happy memories of Rex through my sister-friend Jodi! I had always hoped for a rematch of Rex's and my eating contest at a nearby restaurant. Of course, he won--but not by much! What a wonderfully accepting person he was. I'm sure he's meeting and greeting in the afterlife as we speak. Big hugs to Jodi and Grosh, and all of the Willnow family! I hope you find comfort in your memories of Rex!
Julie and the Myers family*



Julie Myers - January 23, 2016 at 04:11 PM



“ I didn't know Rex, but I know his daughter. Judging from how she turned out, he must have been a great man and a fantastic father. Best Wishes to everyone in the family. --Cory Meacham

Cory Meacham - January 23, 2016 at 12:31 PM

AW

“ 1 file added to the album Photos



Arlene Willnow - January 23, 2016 at 06:16 AM

KV

“ Rex was a great neighbor and friend. We will miss him greatly.

Ken and Amy VanOostendorp

ken vanoostendorp - January 23, 2016 at 03:44 AM

DC

“ I am so sorry for your loss Yogi, Jodi and the rest of your family. I didn't know him, but knew of him, and have always heard that he was an awesome man. God Bless You, your mother and family members...Prayers,



Deborah Campbell - January 23, 2016 at 12:34 AM

SH

“ Condolences and prayers, to you Arlene , Jody, Yogie, Licia and Alex.

It is difficult to go thru the loss of a husband, father, and grandfather. You have so many wonderful memories and love that can't be taken away from you. Rex is at peace now ! God's Blessings, to you all.

Sue and Harlan - January 22, 2016 at 09:12 PM

AW

“ 1 file added to the album New Album Name



Arlene Willnow - January 22, 2016 at 06:34 PM

BB

“ I spent many hours on the paddleball court with Rex. He taught me a lot about tenacity and sportsmanship. Rest in peace my friend.

Bill Barss - January 22, 2016 at 02:39 PM

CS

“ My condolences to Rex's family - he was a wonderful neighbor to my parents at Lakeshire, and always put a smile on everyone's face with a kind word or a joke. May your memories comfort you during this difficult time.

Caroline Schwartz - January 22, 2016 at 12:44 PM

DP

“ My continued prayers and blessings to the family. Rex was always special to me. His wit and wisdom meant a lot. I always enjoyed our talks, personally and professionally.
What a good family! Arlene, Jodi, Yog, Alex, Licia.....
A loss is so hard. You all will find support and comfort through good memories.
It has been an honor, to have Rex consider me his friend.

Debby Pellowe - January 22, 2016 at 09:23 AM

DP

“ Debby Pellowe lit a candle in memory of Gordon "Rex" Willnow



Debby Pellowe - January 22, 2016 at 09:14 AM