



Willis E. Bowser

May 8, 1930 - September 23, 2020

Willis E. Bowser, age 90, of Momence and Monee passed away Wednesday, September 23, 2020 at AMITA St. Mary's Hospital in Kankakee. He was born May 8, 1930 in Bloomington, the son of Alva E. & Lucille (Hindenburg) Bowser.

Willis was the former owner of Kankakee Enterprises Alarm Company, which was acquired by ADT after his retirement in 1987. He was a veteran of the United States Army serving in Japan during the Korean Conflict; and afterward, he became an expert on sound systems, alarms, and electronics, also teaching classes in electrical theory at Kankakee Community College.

Willis's lifelong passion was amateur radio; at the time of his passing, he was the longest continuously-licensed Ham operator in the United States. Known by his call name K9FO and on-air nickname Will, he was active beginning in the 1940's with the Kankakee Area Radio Society (KARS), spoke on-air with thousands of other Hams from over 100 countries, and participated in many Hamfest events and international radio contests through the decades.

Willis was an amateur bicyclist and rode all over Illinois and the U.S. with the Joliet Bicycle Club. An avid chef, he loved cooking and especially enjoyed chili cookoffs and grilling. He was interested in space and planetary exploration, and was a member of the Kankakee Astronomy Club. In the 1970's, Willis

served as Scoutmaster of Boy Scout Troop 308 of the Rainbow Council, welcoming diversity and a forward-looking program to the troop. He was also a lifelong music aficionado, particularly interested in New Orleans jazz; and dearly enjoyed many wonderful evenings of family and friends' live music led by his partner Barbara at their home.

Surviving are one son, Jonathan Bowser of New York, New York; one daughter, Nancy (John) Szymkowski of Bartlett; two grandchildren, Nicholas Szymkowski and Joan Szymkowski; his life partner for over 20 years, Barbara Milosevich of Monee; and her children, Annie (Kevin) Kincaid of Momence, Tom (Grace) Curtis of Des Plaines, Carol Brozo & Jim Kanas of Rolling Meadows, and Paul Curtis of Momence. Willis is preceded in death by his parents.

Cremation rites have been accorded.

A private family memorial service will be held at a later date.

Memorials may be made to American Diabetes Association.

Tribute Wall

SP

“ Will was a dear friend and fellow Ham Radio operator. We shared great conversations almost every day. He once told me "you understand me". I was flattered that he would say that to me! Great times at the place on the river and on the air!

73 will. See you "down the log".

Steve Peters W9KXT

Stephen Peters - October 29, 2020 at 01:34 AM

MM

“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album



Mary J Maxfield - October 12, 2020 at 12:23 PM

MM

“ Bowser Family,
Woody was one of the best neighbors on Hidden River! We always enjoyed visiting with him and remember when he also would bring his dogs to visit too! Woody always had a cookie or two to offer our dog Buddy! We will miss his friendship and always honor the memories of him at Idlewood cottage.
Max, Jane and Buddy II (Maxfield)

Mary J Maxfield - October 11, 2020 at 09:56 AM

LN

“ We met Woody the same day and at the same time that he and Barb met face to face. Our band, consisting of Barb and several other musical friends was playing at a bookstore in downtown Bourbonnais. It seems Woody had struck up an internet friendship with Barb, but they had not, to that point, physically met. He came to our performance, sat unobtrusively through it, and introduced himself to her afterwards while the rest of us were packing up. We were surprised to learn of the burgeoning relationship but a little – actually very much -- leery of this very friendly stranger. Barb invited him to join us all back at her place, and we went, intent on preventing anything untoward from happening. We stayed as it got late – very late – until Barb told us we could go, she'd be fine. The rest of this story is better known. Two talented, sweet, productive, and loving people happily shared twenty years of their lives with each other. We miss Woody's humor, his love of New Orleans jazz, and his fabulous Manhattans. Our hearts go out to his family, his biking and Ham radio friends, and to Barb.

Linda and Bob Nachtrieb
Joliet, Illinois

Linda and Bob Nachtrieb - October 10, 2020 at 10:08 PM

DK

“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album



Don Kerouac K9NR - October 10, 2020 at 04:50 PM

DK

My very close friend of 53 years. We hiked, cross country skied, bicycled, fished, hunted and camped together. We enjoyed Amateur Radio and Amateur Astronomy. Two lefties in a right handed world. In all those years, not a minute that isn't a great memory. Remember forever.

Don Kerouac - October 10, 2020 at 05:07 PM

CB

“ Dear Nancy and family,

Woody was such a special neighbor on Riverside Drive. He always had a friendly smile and loved to chat with us on our walks past his cottage. His achievements in life and his passions were many. We will greatly miss him. Cindy and Don

Cindy Bade - October 09, 2020 at 04:59 PM

KB

“ Will was one of my oldest and best friends.
He will be missed but not forgotten.

73's Will

Ken Buser

Kenneth Buser - October 08, 2020 at 05:14 PM

DC

“ *Joliet Bicycle Club sends our condolences. Ride on Woody!*

Dominick Jr Chellino - October 07, 2020 at 09:24 PM

DB

“Cousin Willis was always so kind to me. I can't remember a time he didn't greet me with smile or kind words. He was a wizard with electronics and we knew that he could fix anything! He will be missed. Hugs to all of you.

Debby Syfert Best - October 07, 2020 at 08:45 PM

JA

“Will taught the Kankakee Area Radio Society class when I studied for my Novice license. 35 years later, I'm still an active ham radio operator and I owe it to Will's patient instruction. I still chuckle when I remember him "tuning up" his code practice oscillator and commenting "mmm, mellow!" in his distinctive voice. I moved away a few years later but was fortunate to see and speak with him at the Dayton Hamvention several years ago. "Gud DX" Will, and 73! Jim Anderson - K0RGI (formerly KA9VHG)

Jim Anderson - October 07, 2020 at 08:34 PM

NS

*Dear Jonathan, Nancy, Barbara and Family,
So very sorry to hear about Mr. Bowser's passing. My deepest condolences to you all! May he Rest In Peace and his memory be eternal!
Sincerely,
Nitza Shawriyeh*

nitza shawriyeh - October 08, 2020 at 12:36 PM

CF

I was very sad to learn of the passing of this very special man. I have so many wonderful memories of Will. He was a very giving person, He will always have a special place in my heart. We biked many miles together. Thank you Barb for being by his side for the past 20 years. I enjoyed you and Will coming to Door County for the Joliet Bicycle Club's annual bike ride and you playing your hammered dulcimer for our group. No doubt Will and Bill Lang are up above swapping biking stories. My thoughts and prayers go out to all of you. RIP Will and pedals up.

Carol Frazier

Carol Frazier - October 08, 2020 at 10:10 PM

MR

“ We are all lesser now without Will. He always was friendly and we cooked together a couple of times. I'll miss his smile and laugh. Rest In Peace old man. Mike Rohwedder WU9D.



Michael Rohwedder - October 06, 2020 at 08:11 AM