



Willie James Rhinehart

June 20, 1932 - February 9, 2025

“My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry” James 1:19

The son of Amanda Simmons & Willie Rhinehart, WJ graduated from the historic Saluda Rosenwald High School in 1951. He Graduated from Midland Technical College with an Associate Degree in Criminal Justice.

He often recounts his admiration for how his father, a brick mason and sharecropper amassed land of his own and somehow bought a car, to insure he and his sister, Annie Ruth, were able to get to school when the segregation laws denied them public school transportation. Although he grew up in the small town of Saluda, it soon became his point of departure from which he would see the world.

Drafted into the Army on November 30, 1951, WJ would go on to complete 8 weeks of basic training In Missouri, and then enrolled at paratroopers jump school at Ft. Benning Georgia in 1952. He was assigned to the iconic 82nd Airborne Division from 1952-53 (the first Black integrated airborne division). Though he would leave the Army in 1953, a year later he had the fortuitous change of mind and re-enlisted in February 1954. WJ was assigned to the 1st Army Unit in New Rochelle, NY, until August 1954 when he decided to further his military status and entered Advanced Military Police School, at Ft Gordon, Georgia. After his graduation, He returned to New Rochelle, NY. In December of 1954 WJ was deployed to Korea where he would complete a 16-month tour

of duty.

His second discharge from the army came in 1957, yet he re-enlisted 3 days after his discharge! That same year, while home on leave with a shiny new car, he met the love of his life; a young teacher from Sumter SC on her first teaching assignment in Saluda, Maggie Lee.

Their family lived for 3 years in Germany before returning to Ft Campbell Kentucky. in 1964 The family moved to Columbia SC, only to have WJ reassigned to Germany once again until his final return to the United States in 1968. WJ thrived in Germany for a collective 6 years even though he never spoke the language fluently!

WJ remained a standout drill sergeant on the United States largest Army Basic training base, Fort Jackson, until his retirement as Staff Sergeant in 1972.

Leaving no grass under his feet and no time to mark a formal retirement, WJ joined the Columbia Police Department 3 days after military retirement! He remained a distinguished police officer for 20 years FINALLY retiring (once again) in May, 1992.

In his retirement he remained an avid listener of music, a wickedly good (and underestimated) pool player, fellowshiping with friends and meeting with Mr. Holt at the VFW, coffee club meetings at McDonald's with Senator Patterson and his crew, and attending Francis Burns Methodist Church.

Willie James Rhinehart, the loving husband, father and son, was predeceased by his parents Amanda Simmons Rhinehart and Willie Rhinehart; and his wife, Maggie Lee Rhinehart.

He is survived by his children Jacqueline Rhinehart, William Rhinehart , & James Rhinehart, sister Annie Ruth Williams, niece, Betty Anne Willams, granddaughter, Brianna Rhinehart, and great aunts Bennie Ruth Harp, Dorothy Patterson, and Jessie Chapman and a host of extended family and friends

Previous Events

Visitation

FEB **19**. 1:00 PM - 7:00 PM (ET)

Palmer Memorial Chapel
1200 Fontaine Place
Columbia, SC 29223

A Celebration of Life

FEB **20**. 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM (ET)

Francis Burns United Methodist Church
5616 Farrow Road
Columbia, SC, SC 29203

Tribute Wall

MM

“ Please accept our deepest condolences on the passing of our dear friend and former client, Mr. Willie Rhinehart. May he rest in heavenly peace. We will keep his family lifted in love and prayer during this difficult time because prayer can go where we can't. Most sincerely,
Mary Miller McClellan & the 3 Generations Adult Day Care Staff

Mary Miller McClellan - February 20, 2025 at 06:37 PM

WB

“ He was my neighbor the majority of my life. Truly a special person and will be missed

Wylene Branch-Troutman - February 20, 2025 at 02:20 PM

CM

“ Our sincere condolences are extended to the Rhinehart family
Harold and Carrie Murray



Carrie R. Murray - February 20, 2025 at 07:56 AM

FP

My Lord, I was just thinking about My Friend Mr. Rhinehart, I used to see at McDonald's during the morning hours, I remember him as the City of Columbia Police department he would do extra duties at my job at Greyhound on Sumter and Blanding St. next to Tapp's Dept. Store just last week he was on my mind.. Our prayers with the Rhinehart family..

Freddie Priester - March 18, 2025 at 09:47 PM

FP

Heaven will smile on you and your family

Freddie Priester - March 18, 2025 at 09:49 PM

FP

Bless the Rhinehart family

Freddie Priester - March 18, 2025 at 09:51 PM

MF

“ *Mrs. Emma Fleming and Family purchased the **With Distinction** for the family of Willie James Rhinehart.*



Mrs. Emma Fleming and Family - February 20, 2025 at 03:50 AM

MF

“ *Mrs. Emma Fleming and Family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Willie James Rhinehart.*

Mrs. Emma Fleming and Family - February 20, 2025 at 03:50 AM

AB

“ *I met Officer Rinheart when I joined the Columbia Police Department in 1974. The entire time working at the Police Department he was a friendly and kind hearted gentleman. I enjoyed the time working with him. My thoughts and prayers are with you during this time. I wish you peace and comfort as you grieve.*

Retired Sgt. Albert Belcher

Albert Belcher - February 19, 2025 at 04:58 PM

SR

“ Susan E Rhinehart-Roberson purchased the Divine Peace Bouquet for the family of Willie James Rhinehart.



Susan E Rhinehart-Roberson - February 19, 2025 at 09:38 AM

SR

“ Susan E Rhinehart-Roberson planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Willie James Rhinehart.

Susan E Rhinehart-Roberson - February 19, 2025 at 09:38 AM

GJ

“ On Behalf of One of Mr. Willie James Great Aunts(Bennie Ruth), She sends peaceful prayers and So much ❤️ to his Children and Sister. His face and demeanor will certainly be missed. The Lord had need of Another Great Human Being. Thanks To Our Father For Sharing 🙏

Gwendolyn H. Jones - February 19, 2025 at 09:33 AM

GW

“ Gwendolyn lit a candle in memory of Willie James Rhinehart



Gwendolyn - February 19, 2025 at 09:24 AM

CG

“ *Deepest condolences to your family*



Cyteria Gantt - February 18, 2025 at 02:01 PM

PB

“ *My heart hurts for the family. I want to thank them for sharing their AWESOME, Caring, Loving Daddy with me.*

portia holt butler - February 17, 2025 at 08:26 PM



“ *Vivid Recollections was purchased for the family of Willie James Rhinehart.*



February 17, 2025 at 12:11 PM

WR

“ I will never forget my dad. He was the best person I ever met and being in the music business you meet a lot of people. When he came home from Germany in 1970, he was finally home for good and I was one happy 10 year old kid For the next 10 years I had a great man in my life who helped me become confident and learn to make my way in the world. Right after finishing my AFA degree he drove me to Boston to attend Berklee College of Music and get my BA. That 16 hour drive was a special trip as I left my home and started a new life. He and my mom were the best parents I could have asked for. After my mom died in 1996, I was back in Columbia with Dad and the next 28 years were magical. I will miss him until I die but I'll never forget the time we spent together those 28 years and I'm so glad to have had them. Goodbye

Daddy, RIP

Your son, William

William Rhinehart - February 17, 2025 at 12:03 PM

JL

“ *Jacqueline Lewis lit a candle in memory of Willie James Rhinehart*



Jacqueline Lewis - February 16, 2025 at 06:54 PM

KA

“ *Our deepest condolences to the family*



Karen Adams - February 16, 2025 at 01:02 AM

LC

“ *Sending our condolences to the family.
Sincerely,
Mr. And Mrs. Willie J Crouch Jr and family.*

Latrisha Crouch - February 14, 2025 at 05:17 PM

YW

“ *My deepest condolences to the Rhinehart family. May God
strengthen you during your time of need.*

Yvette Wider - February 14, 2025 at 10:48 AM

GH

“ *Our deepest sympathy and condolences and
prayers to the family and relatives and
friends.*



Gloria Harrison Brown and Tammy Harrison - February 13, 2025 at 09:42 PM

TE

“ *Too James and Family, you have my sincerest condolences!*



Tracy M Eigner - February 13, 2025 at 09:53 AM

SM

“ *My deepest condolences to the family. I met Mr. Rhinehart around 1991 when he was a Downtown Officer along Main St, and i was a newly hired Police Cadet. Mr. Rhinehart could always be depended upon for a kind word, comforting smile and a bit of much needed wisdom. May he Rest in Peace.*

Sandra McGee-Dodd - February 13, 2025 at 08:45 AM

HP

My condolence to my family. Uncle Rhinehart was a wonderful and loving kind gentleman. May you rest in peace. Horace Pressley

Horace Pressley - February 17, 2025 at 12:28 PM

NS

“ *Our Deepest Condolences to your family. Mr. Willie James was a Client of ours here at New Hope Transport Services, he will be truly missed.*



New Hope Transport Services - February 12, 2025 at 10:48 AM