



Mr. Bennie Ray Tillman

April 3, 1931 - July 16, 2025

Bennie Ray Tillman, 94, passed away peacefully with “His Girls” by his side on July 16, 2025, in Lakeland, Florida.

Ben was born on April 3, 1931, in Tampa, Florida, to TJ and Mamie Tillman. He enlisted in the United States Army in 1947 and served for 23 years, completing three tours in Germany and two during the Vietnam War. He retired as a Command Sergeant Major (E9) at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, in 1971.

When he returned home, he met and married Sharon on January 3, 1972. He became a building contractor and real estate agent, constructing the home where they lived together for 51 of their 53 and a half years of marriage. They used the land around their home in many ways—raising various animals, managing an orange grove, eventually raising cattle, and housing Sharon’s two horses. Ben loved working with his hands in the field. He loved reading, especially westerns and biographies, and watching old western re-runs.

He also loved to travel and made sure to visit every military base PX, but he always looked forward to coming home to “his chair.”

Ben and Sharon loved caring for the children in their extended family, building a special relationship with their niece Hailee, who became like a younger

sister to their daughter Brandy. Ben taught everyone who stayed in his home the values of honesty, hard work, and making smart choices so they could live a life filled with joy. He instilled strong family values and emphasized the importance of taking care of those you love. Beneath his tough exterior, he was a compassionate, devoted, and loyal husband, father, and uncle—and he will be missed every day.

Ben was preceded in death by his parents, TJ and Bea; his stepson Gary, daughter Karen, brother Merle, sister Virginia and her husband Sonny, sister-in-law Vivian, and brother-in-law Guy.

He is survived by his wife, Sharon Tillman; their daughter, Brandy Kern, and her husband, Terry Kern; niece Hailee Charette; sisters in law Jeanette Renfroe and Myrtice Tillman, nephews: Dale Harp and Kyle Bishop; step-granddaughter: Julia Kern; and children from his first marriage: son Bennie Ray Tillman Jr., son-in-law Wayne Wagonbauer, and daughter Susan Ramirez and her husband Porfirio Ramirez.

He is also survived by grandchildren Crystal Tillman, Tiffany Gauty, and Ryan Ramirez; and great-grandchildren Mila Cardoso, Liam Cardoso, Ayla Gauty, Ethan Ramirez, and Logan Ramirez.

Services will be held at Gentry Morrison Funeral Home, Southside Chapel, 1727 Bartow Rd, Lakeland, FL 33801, on July 24th. Viewing begins at 10 a.m., formal service at 11 a.m., and procession to Oak Hill Burial Park to follow with military honors.

Cemetery Details

Oak Hill Burial Park

4620 US Highway 98 S
Lakeland, FL 33812

Previous Events

Visitation

JUL **24.** 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (ET)

Gentry-Morrison Funeral Homes - Southside Chapel
1727 Bartow Road
Lakeland, FL 33801
(863) 688-7679
t.hall@gentry-morrison.com
<https://www.gentry-morrison.com/>

Funeral Service

JUL **24.** 11:00 AM (ET)

Gentry-Morrison Funeral Homes - Southside Chapel
1727 Bartow Road
Lakeland, FL 33801
(863) 688-7679
t.hall@gentry-morrison.com
<https://www.gentry-morrison.com/>

Committal Service w/ Military Honors

JUL **24** (ET)

Oak Hill Burial Park
4620 US Highway 98 S
Lakeland, FL 33812

Tribute Wall



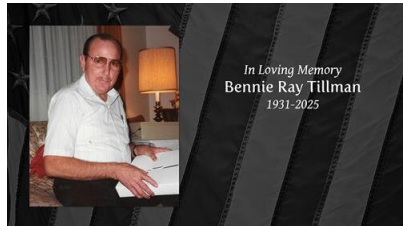
“ Gentry-Morrison Funeral Homes created a Webcast in memory of Mr. Bennie Ray Tillman



Gentry-Morrison Funeral Homes - July 22, 2025 at 01:17 PM



“ Gentry-Morrison Funeral Homes created a Tribute Video in memory of Mr. Bennie Ray Tillman



Gentry-Morrison Funeral Homes - July 22, 2025 at 09:16 AM

MG

“ Margaret G. purchased the Sacred Duty Spray for the family of Mr. Bennie Ray Tillman.



Margaret G. - July 23, 2025 at 02:11 PM

TF

“ *The Ramirez Family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Mr. Bennie Ray Tillman.*

The Ramirez Family - July 22, 2025 at 11:43 AM

TF

“ *The Ramirez Family purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Mr. Bennie Ray Tillman.*



The Ramirez Family - July 22, 2025 at 11:43 AM