



Mr. Jesse Lee Wilkins

May 11, 1928 - June 16, 2025

Jesse Wilkins, born on May 11, 1928, in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, was the fourth of eight children born to the late George and Beatrice Wilkins.

Jesse was educated in the Tuscaloosa County School System. During the Great Migration, he left Tuscaloosa in search of greater opportunities and relocated to Detroit, Michigan, where he built a successful and fulfilling career at Ford Motor Company, working for over 30 years.

Shortly after settling in Detroit, Jesse met and married the love of his life, Shirley Wilkins. Together, they shared 61 wonderful years, known for their impeccable sense of style and gracious hospitality. They were affectionately called “Mr. and Mrs. Esquire.” Jesse was not only a distinguished dresser but also a master in the kitchen, celebrated for his soul food cooking, which brought people together with warmth and tradition.

Jesse was a man of deep faith and a devoted supporter of Fellowship Full Gospel Church, where his sister, Olenor Hyche, served as Head Pastor. In retirement, he found joy in simple pleasures like tinkering with his beloved red Ford F-150, enjoying his Cadillacs, and watching sports. His life was marked by quiet strength, dignity, and a warm, infectious smile. His longevity and character were a testament to a life well lived.

He is preceded in death by:

- His beloved wife, Shirley Wilkins
- His daughter, Audrey Bradley
- Five of his siblings: George Wilkins Jr., Juanita Kemp, Olenor Hyche, Vanell Millsaps, and Ruth Harden

He is lovingly remembered by:

- His children: Jewel Ferrell and Arnett Smith, both of St. Louis, Missouri
- His grandchildren:
James Bradley of Tuscaloosa, Alabama, and
Alanna Ferrell, Bryan Ferrell, and Kris Ferrell White, all of St. Louis, Missouri
- His beloved sisters:
Willie Beatrice Rush of Tuscaloosa, Alabama
Queen Elizabeth Avery of Detroit, Michigan

His devoted nieces:

- Alaina Wilkins of Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, whom he helped raise as a daughter, sharing a close and lifelong bond filled with love and a shared passion for sports
- Sheila Ragland of Detroit, Michigan, whose compassion, dedication, and hands-on support brought him peace and comfort

And a host of other nieces, nephews, extended family, and friends who were deeply touched by his life, love, and legacy.

“Well done, good and faithful servant.” – Matthew 25:23

Cemetery Details

Woodlawn Cemetery

19975 Woodward Ave.
Detroit, MI 48203

Previous Events

Visitation

Tuesday, Jun. **24.** 3:00 PM - 8:00 PM (ET)

O. H. Pye, III Funeral Home
17600 Plymouth Road
Detroit, MI 48227
(313) 838-9770
info@pyefuneralhome.com

Family Hour / Visitation

Wednesday, Jun. **25.** 9:30 AM - 10:00 AM (ET)

O. H. Pye, III Funeral Home
17600 Plymouth Road
Detroit, MI 48227
(313) 838-9770
info@pyefuneralhome.com

Celebration of Life

Wednesday, Jun. **25**. 10:00 AM - 11:15 AM (ET)

O. H. Pye, III Funeral Home
17600 Plymouth Road
Detroit, MI 48227
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Tribute Wall

AW

“ *Rest well uncle*

Andre Wilkins - June 23, 2025 at 03:38 AM

MS

“ *Uncle no more suffering you will go home with the lord we will miss you*

Michael Smith - June 19, 2025 at 03:23 PM

AL

“ *Uncle J—I’ll miss hearing your funny stories about your days working at Ford Motor Company and our back-and-forth debates about whether foreign or American-made cars were better. I’ll miss watching football with you and seeing your smile. You were always there for me and looked out for me, and I can’t thank you enough for everything. I will cherish you in my heart forever. Rest in peace.*



alaina - June 19, 2025 at 02:08 PM

MS

“ *Wishing you peace to bring comfort, courage to face the days ahead, and loving memories to forever hold dear in your hearts. My condolences to you and your family.*

Marcella Shoffner - June 19, 2025 at 07:02 AM

SR

“ *Uncle Jesse get your rest thanks for the memories. Love you Shelia*

shelia Ragland - June 18, 2025 at 05:28 PM

MS

“ *Well uncle we going to miss you now you can rest in heaven*

Michael Smith - June 18, 2025 at 03:05 PM