



Franklin Gray

October 24, 1933 - May 4, 2026

Franklin Chieves Gray, age 92 of Athens, Alabama, passed away peacefully at home on Monday May 4th, 2026 surrounded by his four daughters. To those who knew him, he was the steady compass by which many of his loved ones navigated life-an advisor, confidant and a source of steadfast humor. Born October 24th, 1933 to James Woodrow Gray and Mary Magdalene Gaston Gray in Salem, Alabama, Franklin carried with him a lifelong spirit of introspection and a sense of purpose. He was a family man and a man of principle: honest, direct, and unwavering in his beliefs with a rare combination of candor and compassion, never shy about telling the truth, but guided by a sincere desire to help others grow.

The devoted husband of Mary Josephine Willis Gray whom he always called his "Sweetheart", and the patriarch of his family, he was the go to source for thoughtful counsel. His advice came not only from clever words, but also from a place of deep spiritual reflection and a close relationship with God. He believed in faith, family, perseverance, "gumption" and the quiet strength of doing the right thing, even when it wasn't easy.

His sense of humor was a gift he shared freely, lightening heavy moments and bringing smiles to all who were fortunate enough to hear his remarks. He approached life with wit, wisdom and a gentleness that made people feel seen and valued. He had many interests through the years from photography and gardening to teaching electronics and was a devoted Gideon and loyal Braves fan.

Franklin is survived by his daughters; Janet (Randy) Utsey of Daphne, Pat (Jack) Lann of Athens, Pam (John) Wilson of Paraguay and Jennifer (Jerry) Hooper of Athens; Grandchildren: Lauren Strain, Louisa Marks (Brooks), Will Strain, Alex Lann, Jillian McNichol (Christopher), Cal Wilson, Frank Wilson, Holt Wilson, Jay Hooper, Molly Lauderback (John) and Ben Hooper; Great Grandchildren: Brooks Marks, Saima Marks, Gray Marks, Lucy Lauderback and Ava Lauderback; Nieces and nephews: John Balch (Sheila), Margaret Farmer (John) and Gary Willis (Alicia)

He was preceded in death by his wife Mary Josephine Gray, his parents: James Woodrow Gray and Mary Magdalene Gaston Gray and his sister, Annette Gray Balch and brother-in-law Billy Balch.

The family remembers him as a pillar of strength and integrity, a constant source of guidance and a beloved friend whose presence will be very deeply missed.

Visitation for Mr. Gray will be May 9th, 2026 from 11:00 am until 12:45 pm at Limestone Chapel Funeral Home. Service will follow with Barry Dunn officiating in the Chapel at 1:00 pm. Mr. Gray will be laid to rest at Isom's Chapel Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, donations to The Gideons or missionaries Josiah and Brandy McIntyre (Eyes Wide Open Ministries, P.O. Box 245, Florence, AL 35631) or Daniel and Marian Sims (14404 Pinecone Rd., Orlando, FL 32832-6561) would be greatly appreciated.

Cemetery Details

Isom's Chapel Cemetery

Previous Events

Visitation

MAY 9. 11:00 AM - 12:45 PM (CT)

Limestone Chapel Funeral Home
322 Highway 31 North
Athens, AL 35611
info@limestonechapel.com

Service

MAY 9. 1:00 PM (CT)

Limestone Chapel Funeral Home
322 Hwy. 31 N.
Athens, AL 35611
(256) 232-1051
info@limestonechapel.com
<https://www.limestonechapel.com/>

Tribute Wall

MW

“ There are some people you meet in life that changes you for the better. For me, Franklin Gray was that person. He never hesitated to set the record straight but with kindness and compassion. His spirit will be carried with me forever more.

Melissa Ward, CRNP

Melissa Ward - May 07 at 09:02 AM