



Billy Wilson Howard Sr.

January 26, 1927 - January 28, 2026

Billy Wilson Howard, Sr., born January 26, 1927, in Louisville, Mississippi, passed away on January 28, 2026, after a remarkable life spanning nearly a century. A visionary entrepreneur, decorated athlete, devoted family man, and respected community leader, he touched countless lives through his leadership, generosity, and unwavering values. Mr. Howard was born to Lula Mae (Wilson) Howard and Anse Bond Howard, Sr. One of six children, he was raised with strong values of discipline, faith, and service that guided him throughout a remarkable life spanning nearly a century.

He married the love of his life, Linda (Tabor) Howard, on April 1, 1970. Their marriage was a true partnership, marked by deep devotion and mutual respect, and endured for 49 years until Linda's passing on April 4, 2019. Later in life, Billy married Pat Myers, who survives him. He was preceded in death by his parents; his sister, Emma (Howard) Truitt; and his brothers, James "Jimmy" Howard, Sr., Lidell "Cowboy" Howard, and Anse Bond (A.B.) Howard, Jr.

Mr. Howard is survived by his three children: Billy Howard, Jr. (Pam), Michael Howard (Katy), and Cyndi Howard McCoy (Kyle); eight grandchildren and three grandchildren-in-law: Mary Alice (Howard) Thornhill (Adam), Leslie Howard, Karly McCoy, Will McCoy (Mikala), Anna Kate Howard Ozmint (Pace), Andrew Howard (Fiancée, Marley Boyt), Ellie Howard, and Abby

Howard; and his cherished great-grandchildren: Tabor, Deacon, Waylon, and Emi Joy McCoy, and Oliver and Isla Thornhill, as well as the Ozmint twins expected later this year. He is also survived by his sister, Dorothy Mae Jones, and a large and loving extended family of nieces and nephews.

Family was the center of Billy's life. In his later years, nothing brought him greater joy than time spent with his grandchildren and great-grandchildren, whom he adored. Though the youngest generation never met the formidable and loving presence of "Gran Gran" or "Grandmommy," he often reflected that his beloved Linda would have delighted in knowing them. Their legacy lives on through family stories of the enduring love she shared with "Pipa" or "Grandpa."

A gifted student and extraordinary athlete, Mr. Howard graduated with honors from Laurel High School in 1944, completing his studies in just two years and lettering in football, basketball, and track. At only 15 years old, he was named "All Big 8" in basketball, the youngest athlete ever to receive that honor. During his senior year, he set a state record in the discus, won first place in shot put, discus, and high jump, and was part of the first-place relay team, scoring more points than any athlete in a single state track meet at the time.

He attended Mississippi State University on a football scholarship, earning a Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering in just three years while lettering in football, basketball, and track. Known for his stamina and toughness, he earned the nickname "Iron Man" for playing nearly every minute of every football game. One of his most treasured memories—and favorite stories—was intercepting Y.A. Tittle's pass to score the game-winning touchdown in the final seconds of the 1945 victory over LSU. He later declined offers from the NFL, including the Chicago Bears and San Diego Chargers. Athletic excellence ran deep in the Howard family, with three brothers, a son, and a son-in-law also playing collegiate football.

Mr. Howard's athletic achievements earned him induction into the Mississippi State University Sports Hall of Fame, along with the Outstanding Alumni Award and the Distinguished American Award from the National Football Foundation. He later served as National President of the Mississippi State Alumni Association.

Mississippi State University held a special place in Mr. Howard's heart and was foundational to the life he built. He firmly believed that education opens doors, and he often said that without the opportunity provided by his football scholarship and his education at Mississippi State University, none of his accomplishments would have been possible. The knowledge, discipline, and values he gained there shaped his career, his leadership, and his lifelong commitment to hard work and opportunity for others. He remained deeply grateful to Mississippi State for the role it played in helping him turn ambition into achievement.

After graduating, Mr. Howard briefly returned to Laurel High School to teach chemistry and coach football, basketball, and track before beginning his professional career as an electrical engineer with Mississippi Power Company. He later served his country as a First Lieutenant in the United States Air Force during the Korean War.

Following his military service, he joined General Electric, where his brilliance and leadership propelled him to the position of National Sales Manager for Distribution Transformers and later to a vice-presidential staff role overseeing seven production facilities. His many honors at GE included the Creativity Award, President Cordiner's Award, Breakthrough 60 Award, Best Speaker's Award, and recognition at GE's Crotonville Advanced Management School.

In 1968, driven by vision and confidence, Mr. Howard founded Howard Industries, Inc. in Laurel, Mississippi. Before the company's first plant was

even completed, he secured more than \$4 million in transformer orders—a testament to the trust others placed in his leadership. With the steadfast support of his wife, Linda, and later his children and grandchildren, he grew Howard Industries into a billion-dollar enterprise and a global leader across multiple industries.

Mr. Howard's heart never left his hometown of Laurel. He believed deeply in the people of Mississippi—their honesty, grit, and quiet strength—and it was his love for them that drew him back home to build his company. He saw possibilities where others might not and trusted the character of the men and women who stood beside him. To Mr. Howard, his employees were family in the truest sense, and he took great pride in knowing them not just for the work they did, but for who they were. The success of his life's work was rooted in his love for Laurel and in the people of Mississippi, whose dedication, loyalty, and heart meant everything to him.

Equally committed to community service, Mr. Howard dedicated countless hours to civic and charitable leadership. He served in numerous roles, including the Rotary Club, Jones County Chamber of Commerce (President), Laurel Community Concert Association (President), Lauren Rogers Museum Board, St. John's Day School Board, and as a Boy Scout Master and youth sports coach, to name just a few.

Mr. and Mrs. Howard believed deeply that education changes lives and that strong schools are the foundation of strong communities. Together, they quietly supported schools locally and throughout Mississippi, always mindful of the opportunities education had afforded him and determined to extend those same opportunities to others. He and Linda also established grants for local schools. They spearheaded fundraising efforts that transformed educational and athletic facilities throughout their community, including notable improvements in the Laurel City Schools, Jones County Schools, and

Jones College. The Howards' generosity was guided by gratitude and faith, and Mr. Howard found his greatest satisfaction in knowing that their giving helped open doors for students and families across the state.

Throughout his life, Mr. Howard received numerous honors recognizing his impact, including the Governor's Bronze Glove Award, Junior Auxiliary Co-Humanitarian of the Year, Entrepreneur of the Year honors, induction into the Mississippi Business Hall of Fame, and many others.

Billy Wilson Howard, Sr.'s life was defined not only by its length, but by its depth—marked by faith, perseverance, generosity, and an unwavering commitment to excellence. His legacy lives on through his family, his company, and the countless lives he touched. He will be deeply missed and forever remembered.

Visitation will be held Monday, February 2, 2026, from 9-11 a.m. at St. John's Episcopal Church in Laurel with service to follow at 11:30 a.m. Father Jeff Reich will officiate.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in Mr. Howard's honor to two of his most treasured places, St. John's Day School and St. John's Episcopal Church.

To view or sign the online guest book, visit www.memorychapellaurel.com.

Cemetery Details

Lake Park Cemetery

1303 Old Bay Springs Rd
Laurel, MS 39440

Previous Events

Visitation

FEB 2. 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (CT)

St. John's Episcopal Church
540 N 5th Ave
Laurel, MS 39440

Service

FEB 2. 11:30 AM (CT)

St. John's Episcopal Church
540 N 5th Avenue
Laurel, MS 39440

Tribute Wall

DC

“ *The world lost a good man!*

Davis Causey - May 04 at 11:27 AM

CH

“ *I remember when I first heard about Mr. Howard and his family I was working at sunflower grocery store in North Laurel. His daughter used to come in with his grandson will at the time his wife also shot At Belk Of Laurel where I worked. He was a very nice man and my condolences to the entire family.RIP Mr Howard 🙏🌸🙏*

Christine Hatten - February 04 at 04:09 AM



“ *Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Billy Wilson Howard Sr..*



February 02 at 12:38 PM

DS

“ *To Michael and the entire Howard Family ... God bless you all as you remember and honor Billy. What an amazing man and incredible life he lived! I am blessed to know him. His legacy lives on in each of us. We are praying for you - for God to hold you all tight in His loving arms and for you to know His love, peace and strength. God bless you!*

Darrel Savage - February 02 at 10:00 AM



“ Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Billy Wilson Howard Sr..



February 02 at 09:14 AM



“ Deepest Sympathy Extended to the Family in the Loss of Mr. Howard.
Many Prayers for Comfort and Peace.

Linda Patterson

Linda Patterson - February 01 at 10:00 PM



“ Joel Cain & Amie McQueen purchased the Emerald Garden Basket for the family of Billy Wilson Howard Sr..



Joel Cain & Amie McQueen - February 01 at 07:29 PM



“ From Mississippi Power Company purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of Billy Wilson Howard Sr..



From Mississippi Power Company - February 01 at 07:14 PM

JS

“ John S. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Billy Wilson Howard Sr..

John S. - February 01 at 11:13 AM



“ Loving Lilies and Roses Bouquet was purchased for the family of Billy Wilson Howard Sr..



February 01 at 11:13 AM

MK

“ Manuel & Kathy purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Billy Wilson Howard Sr..



Manuel & Kathy - January 31 at 04:04 PM

MS

“ Manuel S. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Billy Wilson Howard Sr..

Manuel S. - January 31 at 03:56 PM

JB

“ Jeremy Stephens and PNC Private Bank planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Billy Wilson Howard Sr..

Jeremy Stephens and PNC Private Bank - January 30 at 03:21 PM

JB

“ Jeremy Stephens and PNC Private Bank purchased the Magnificent Life Spray for the family of Billy Wilson Howard Sr..



Jeremy Stephens and PNC Private Bank - January 30 at 03:21 PM

AF

“ Angela F. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Billy Wilson Howard Sr..

Angela F. - January 30 at 01:04 PM

AF

“ Angela F. purchased the Emerald Garden Basket for the family of Billy Wilson Howard Sr..



Angela F. - January 30 at 01:04 PM



“ *Sentiments of Serenity Spray was purchased for the family of Billy Wilson Howard Sr..*



January 30 at 12:34 PM



“ *Loving Lilies and Roses Bouquet was purchased for the family of Billy Wilson Howard Sr..*



January 30 at 12:24 PM



“ *I was an employee of Howard Industries for 34 years. I appreciate so much what this family meant to my family and what it is doing for Jones County. My condolences to all the family
Lozon Meadows*

lozon meadows - January 30 at 11:55 AM



“ *So sorry for your loss Loved Mr Billy and love All of you Sue Meadows*

Sue Meadows - January 30 at 11:45 AM



“ *Large Basket Garden was purchased for the family of Billy Wilson Howard Sr..*



January 30 at 11:34 AM



“ *Jim and Tommy Duff planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Billy Wilson Howard Sr..*

Jim and Tommy Duff - January 30 at 11:34 AM



“ *Lily and Rose Tribute Spray was purchased for the family of Billy Wilson Howard Sr..*



January 30 at 10:24 AM



“ *Chase and Jane Jordan planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Billy Wilson Howard Sr..*

Chase and Jane Jordan - January 30 at 10:24 AM

EM

“ EnSafe - Jackson, MS planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Billy Wilson Howard Sr..

EnSafe - Jackson, MS - January 30 at 10:14 AM

EM

“ EnSafe - Jackson, MS purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of Billy Wilson Howard Sr..



EnSafe - Jackson, MS - January 30 at 10:14 AM

KP

“ Kristen Allen & Nicholas Pry purchased the Crystal Cross Bouquet for the family of Billy Wilson Howard Sr..



Kristen Allen & Nicholas Pry - January 30 at 09:58 AM

KP

“ Kristen Allen & Nicholas Pry planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Billy Wilson Howard Sr..

Kristen Allen & Nicholas Pry - January 30 at 09:58 AM

CN

“ Carolyn, Howard, Annette, Jason, Nisie purchased the Blue Caribbean Bouquet for the family of Billy Wilson Howard Sr..



Carolyn, Howard, Annette, Jason, Nisie - January 30 at 09:46 AM



“ Country Basket Blooms was purchased for the family of Billy Wilson Howard Sr..



January 30 at 09:37 AM

DO

“ Dot purchased the Rose Garden Heart for the family of Billy Wilson Howard Sr..



Dot - January 30 at 09:29 AM

AL

“ He was an outstanding person who did a lot for the surrounding community.

Anthony Lockhart

Anthony Lockhart - January 30 at 07:53 AM