



Lonnie Robert Stephens

May 28, 1938 - October 20, 2022

Lonnie Robert Stephens, EMC, passed away on October 20, 2022, at the age of 84.

Lonnie was born May 28, 1938, in Laurel, Mississippi, to Lonnie Rue Stephens and Forrestine Anderson Burt. As a young boy, Lonnie lived with his maternal grandparents, and still recalled many years later the challenges of country life in the early 1940s, without electricity or running water. He spent most of his childhood in Mississippi, during which he formed a special bond with Clifford and Mildred Joyal, whom he affectionately considered “Mama” and “Daddy.”

Following high school graduation, Lonnie joined the United States Naval Services and was stationed on the USS Gyatt (DDG-1) in Norfolk, Virginia until February 1960, when he joined the Navy Reserve. He returned to the Navy three years later and remained in the Navy until his retirement in 1979, during which he served numerous assignments, including three tours of duty in Vietnam.

Lonnie served the majority of his Naval career as an Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Technician. While deployed in Vietnam, he responded to more than 125 calls for assistance and 30 diving operations to perform the hazardous task of disarming explosive devices, all with an enviable safety

record. On Christmas Eve in 1969, Lonnie volunteered to dive beneath ships in the DaNang Harbor to search for possible mining. Enemy swimmers were sighted in the harbor, and realizing that time was of the essence, Lonnie searched four ships, completing numerous dives beneath the last ship without the assistance of air tanks. He was awarded the Bronze Star Medal for his professionalism and devotion to duty under arduous living and working conditions and frequent enemy attacks, in keeping with the highest traditions of the Navy.

While Lonnie's devotion to duty earned him high honors in the Navy, he was most devoted to his loving wife of 62 years, Peggy Brownlee Stephens, and his children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. To his family, he was the best husband and daddy in the world. Despite all that he had experienced throughout his childhood and career, "Chief" (as he was known to his grandchildren and great-grandchildren) was happy-go-lucky, witty, and loved to make people laugh and smile. The highlight of his week was going to the American Legion on Friday and Saturday to share a beer (or two, or three) and some jokes with the locals. He was also a master carpenter who could build just about anything, from just about anything. Many of his creative builds still adorn the home he shared with Peggy and will be treasured for years to come by his family.

Left to cherish Chief's memory are his wife, Peggy; children, Elisa Stephens Randall (Robbie) and Lonnie Edward Stephens (Judy); grandchildren, Christopher Patrick Kenny (Chantelle), Eric Robert Kenny (Erin), Jacob Robert Stephens and Jarrett Nathaniel Stephens; and great-grandchildren Alisha Renee Kenny, Averie Elizabeth Kenny, Brooks Robert Kenny and James Maxwell "Max" Kenny; and one sister, Sherry Stephens Varner.

He was preceded in death by his parents; one brother, Jackie Rue Stephens; his parents-in-love, Clifford and Mildred Joyal; and sister-in-love, Mildred

Gossett.

A graveside service will be held Wednesday, October 26, at 2:00 p.m. at Sunset Gardens Cemetery on Wansley Rd., Laurel, MS. Bro. John Stockstill will officiate.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks that donations be made in Chief's honor to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital (www.stjude.org).

To sign the online guestbook, please visit www.memorychapellaurel.com

Previous Events

Graveside Service

OCT **26**. 2:00 PM (CT)

Sunset Gardens Cemetery
1206 Wansley Road
Laurel, MS 39440

Tribute Wall

SC

“ Peggy & Family, I had an appointment w/Stephanie & she told me about the passing of your husband & how sad you were...we are so very sorry for the loss of your loved one...we ask the Lord to please give you comfort & peace at this very sad time.
Love, Lessie Ree Clark
Shelton & Rhonda Cooley & Family

Shelton & Rhonda Cooley - October 27, 2022 at 06:08 PM

JB

“ Peggy, We are so sorry for your loss. Praying for your comfort and peace.



Janie Butts - October 25, 2022 at 07:41 PM



“ Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Lonnie Robert Stephens.



October 24, 2022 at 08:36 PM



“ He was always happy to see me come to the house cause he knew that I was about to fix Mrs Peggys computer and that would make her happy and then he was happy she was happy lady again.

Bobby Schumann - October 24, 2022 at 05:23 PM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum* was purchased for the family of Lonnie Robert Stephens.



October 24, 2022 at 11:21 AM