



Robert Keith "Bob" Wheeler

October 19, 1938 - October 12, 2025

Only one life 'twill soon be past; Only what is done for Christ will last." That quote hung on the wall of Bobby Wheeler's garage for over 50 years. It was more than a saying or decoration, it was how Bobby lived his life.

Robert Keith "Bob" Wheeler's one life came to pass on October 12, 2025 at 4:15am, reaching the age of 86. It was the life he lived for Christ that will leave a lasting legacy for his family, his friends, and anyone who met him.

Bob was born October 19, 1938, in Vonore, TN, to Robert and Ella Sue Starritt Wheeler. Bob, or "Lefty" as he was often called, was a true Vonore Blue Devil, He played softball and football for the Blue Devils, graduating with the class of 1957. Bob worked at Charles Dotson's filling station at the underpass in Vonore where he developed his lifelong passion for antique vehicles and first laid eyes on Shirley, the love of his life. After serving in the US Army, Bob returned to Monroe County where he worked at Loomis Packaging Company and later at Tennessee Packaging Company before retiring. Retirement did not suit him, and he worked for Sweetwater Valley Metal Products before finally retiring from Hunt Service Company to become a fulltime Poppy. During his years in Sweetwater he was once active in the Odd Fellows Lodge, served on the Sweetwater Utility Board for 24 years, held many positions at First Baptist Church, and after many years as a deacon at FBC he became a deacon emeritus in 2018.

He was preceded in death by the love of his life Shirley Faye Porter Wheeler, his parents Robert and Ella Sue Starritt, his daughter-in-law Anne Marie

Wheeler, brothers Gerald, Ronald, Rex, and Mickey Wheeler, sister Susan Charleece (Cookie) Wheeler, sister-in-law Linda (Cookie) Wheeler, and brother-in-law Ted Porter.

He is survived by sons and daughter-in-law, Keith Wheeler, Kevin Wheeler, and Trish Wheeler. His beloved grandchildren Isaac (Danielle) Wheeler, Kellie Wheeler (Dylan Tumbleson), Ella (William) Barnett, Tyler Wheeler, Rob Wheeler (Alex Moffat), Mattie Wheeler, Kiya Shea Wheeler, and Grace Anne Wheeler. Great grandchildren that were the joy of his last years, Kash Wayne Tumbleson, Annie Mae Barnett, Bane Robert Tumbleson, and an extra Henley Elizabeth Coley. Brother Freddie Wheeler of Waco Texas, brother and sister-in-law Steve (Annette) Wheeler of Vonore, sisters-in-laws Betty Wheeler of Gatesville, Texas, Barbara McCammon of Vonore, and Margaret White of Vonore. He was loved and cherished his nieces Melissa Gray, Michelle Miller, Denise Bolinger, Kelly Wheeler, Charleece Wheeler, Lavonne Wheeler, Renee Leon, and Lisa Vineyard and nephews Mark Wheeler, Mitch Wheeler, and Matt Wheeler and all of their families. His like grandchildren and their families Jessica (Jamie) White, Betsy Burris, Jennifer (Jeremy) Cansler, and Rob (Stephannie) Burris.

He is also survived by innumerable children whose lives he and Shirley impacted. All of them calling him Poppy, because of the fierce and unconditional love he and Shirley provided, as though they were their own. He enjoyed helping many get their first jobs, buy their first cars, obtain their first loans, showed any who ask how to work on their vehicles, and left most with a lifelong nickname and all with a piece of his heart. When saying their name he would add Wheeler to the end, showing how loved they were and claiming them as his and Nana's.

The family will receive friends from 5-7pm at First Baptist Church Sweetwater. The funeral services will follow at 7pm with lifelong friend Rev. Tommy Glenn Self and his Sunday School teacher Deacon Phil Roy officiating. Interment will be at 11:00 A.M. Wednesday in the Vonore Methodist Church Cemetery in Vonore. Pallbearers will be: William Barnett, Connor Burris, Rob Burris, Ricky

Richesin, Charlie Ritchie, Dylan Tumbleson, Kash Tumbleson, Isaac Wheeler, Rob Wheeler, and Kevin Williams. Honorary pallbearers are his longtime “car buddies”.

The family request people drive their antique or oldest vehicle, especially for the interment processional. Apparel advertising your favorite antique vehicle, car show t-shirt, or brand of vehicle are welcomed to be worn as a sweet memory.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to the Finish the Vision program at First Baptist Church Sweetwater, First Presbyterian Church Sweetwater, or to the Shirley Wheeler piano fund at Tennessee Wesleyan University.

Cemetery Details

Vonore United Methodist Church Cemetery

697 Church Street
Vonore, TN 37885

Previous Events

Visitation

OCT **14**. 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM (ET)

First Baptist Church Sweetwater
303 Wright St.
Sweetwater, TN 37874

Funeral Service

OCT **14**. 7:00 PM (ET)

First Baptist Church Sweetwater
303 Wright St.
Sweetwater, TN 37874

Interment

OCT **15**. 11:00 AM (ET)

Vonore United Methodist Church Cemetery
697 Church Street
Vonore, TN 37885

Tribute Wall

SS

“ Sarah Shewmake purchased the Florist Choice Bouquet for the family of Robert Keith "Bob" Wheeler.



Sarah Shewmake - October 14, 2025 at 12:35 PM

JA

“ I was so sorry to hear about Bobby's passing, but I know he is now with Shirley, the love of his life. We were always close to the Wheeler boys. Bobby's mother Ella Sue was a precious lady who loved the Lord. She was active in the church and everyone loved her. Prayers for the entire Wheeler family.

Jo Anderson - October 14, 2025 at 10:43 AM

DG

“ The first time I met Bob was just after becoming his neighbor. It snowed and my car was stuck so he pulled it out with the old blue Ranger. He didn't know me at the time, but that's who he was, always willing to help out a neighbor. He always called me "neighbor" even years after I moved away. A better neighbor nor a better friend could anyone have ever asked for. You will be missed, "neighbor." Prayers for all the family.

Darren Gibson - October 13, 2025 at 05:10 PM

CT

I will miss being called "Kirkpatrick," my maiden name by Bob every Sunday at church. All who knew him appreciated his sweet, sweet Christian spirit. But he and his kindness will live on in the lives of his children, grandchildren, and the many friends 🤝 whose lives he touched. One sweet memory I have is when I had a 7 foot Christmas 🎄 stored on the top shelf in n my utility room...no way I could get it down & in the house. Rob was my lawn mower at the time. He took it down, assembled it and came back after Christmas and did all in reverse. He refused to take any pay. The entire Wheeler is so special. Bob will be missed, but his legacy will live on!

Carol Kirkpatrick Taylor - October 18, 2025 at 11:58 AM

CT

Happy Homecoming in heaven, Bob!!!

Carol Kirkpatrick Taylor - October 18, 2025 at 12:03 PM

EN

“ *I'm so sorry to hear about Bobby! He was my dad's cousin (Roe Starrett). We always loved to go to the flea market to go see Mr. Bobby. Our thoughts and prayers are with you all during this time.*

Edna Nelson - October 13, 2025 at 03:51 PM

PJ

“ *I would have to visit the Sweetwater flesh market just to see Bob. He was always so polite n friendly. My 2nd husband was kin to Bob n Shirley, his name is Daniel west. I can't wait to see bo when it's my time , I have missed out being around him. I pray for the wheelers n my condolences goes out to the family.*



Pauline west johnson - October 13, 2025 at 02:34 PM

JW

Shirley and Bob were the best baby sitters-for a lot of kids in Sweetwater. My two included. Loved them all . Keith and Kevin , I am so sorry for your loss.

Judy Wicker - October 13, 2025 at 04:26 PM

JE

“ *Joyce Eckert purchased the Beautiful Heart Bouquet for the family of Robert Keith "Bob" Wheeler.*



Joyce Eckert - October 13, 2025 at 12:16 PM

JN

“ *I think Bob and Shirley, (Nana and Poppy), raised probably half of Sweetwater over the years. Me, David, Lori and Jan were probably some of the first they took in so our mom could work to support us. I remember driving some of Bob's old cars in parades and how he gave a teenage me a job at Loomis Packaging and making sure I stayed out of site of the inspectors because I was too young to work there. Bob was basically the father I did not have growing up. I have such fond memories of both him and Shirley. As much as we are saddened, he is back with his love Shirley and that makes me smile. Love you Poppy!*

Jeff Nelson - October 13, 2025 at 11:45 AM

BM

“ I smiled when I read about Bob mentoring kids. He was a mentor to a 17 year-old car-nut kid as far back as 56 years ago. That would be me. Looking back, I might have made a pest of myself, but he never made me feel that way. He was always patient and kind with me. My first old car was a 1940 Dodge but I soon had a black 1940 Ford coupe like my buddy Bob. He was the best. He will be missed. - Bobby Miller

Bobby Miller - October 13, 2025 at 10:51 AM



“ Emerald Garden Basket was purchased for the family of Robert Keith "Bob" Wheeler.



October 13, 2025 at 10:44 AM

PH

“ The Family of Robert Hunt extends our deepest condolences to all of Bobs beloved family. Bob and Robert Hunt had a special (almost brotherly) relationship and we are so thankful he was a part of Hunt Service Company. He will be missed by all who knew him and welcomed in Heaven by all his loved ones that went before him. 🌹

Patricia Hunt - October 13, 2025 at 10:13 AM