



## Willy Konrad Kunze

May 13, 1933 - January 16, 2025

Willy K. Kunze, beloved husband, dad, grandpa, great grandpa, brother, uncle, cousin, and friend passed away peacefully at his home on the farm in Oregon City, OR on January 16, 2025, at the age of 91 ½ years old. His daughters, Susie and Diane were with him.

He is preceded in death by his wife, Mary, his parents Herman and Erma Kunze and siblings, Martha, Max and Else, as well as other relatives and friends.

Willy is survived by his younger brother Ernie, younger sister Helen Lara, his children, Lisa, husband Ed Heilman, David, wife Sandi, Diane, Susie, and Jimmy. Grandchildren, Jill St. John, Ann Rustrum, Hope Dorsey, Jacob, Keith and Merrie Kunze, Chase, Caleb and Bethany Kraft and Andrew Kunze. And great-grandchildren, Josey, Anaya and Levi Dorsey, Summer and Tay St. John and Lexi and Brody Rustrum.

Willy was born on May 13, 1933, the fourth child of his parents in their home on a small farm in Sunnyside, OR. Herman and Erma were immigrants from Germany and only spoke German in their home. Willy and his siblings went to Sunnyside grade school where they learned English. School was hard for Willy, and he had to repeat the first grade 2 times. His dad would bring him pictures to color at school and he still has a few of them. Willy and his brother Ernie explored all the hills, mountains, caves, valleys, and creeks of

Sunnyside and Happy Valley. They swam in Rock Creek and even the Clackamas River. Willy was a good swimmer and a good shot with throwing a rock by hand or with a sling shot and even a good shot with a gun. He would get into trouble for breaking the telephone insulators on the wires above his head. When he was older, he won prizes at the carnival from the throwing games. Willy and Ernie would help their dad on the farm harvesting the vegetables and raspberries he raised. Then they would go with him to the farmers market in Portland to sell them. They had their share of chores to do as well. When one of the cows died, Willy and Ernie were tasked with the chore of burying it. They dug a huge hole in the ground and rolled the cow in the hole. However, the hole was not quite big enough because all 4 feet were sticking out in the air. Not knowing how to get the cow out or what to do, they got a saw and cut off all 4 legs and threw them in the hole and covered it up. They also raised some pigs, and it was Willy's job to catch the blood when the throat was cut. One time the pig got loose after it got cut by the knife and ran all over getting everything all bloody including Willy. He could never stand the sight of blood after that. Willy always wanted to play baseball, so he started a team. A kind lady helped them get a hay field behind the grange hall turned into a baseball field. Willy bought the bases and home plate. He found a sponsor who helped the boys get into a league and they played so well they won the championship that year.

Willy graduated from Milwaukie High School in 1953. He was a 4-year letterman in track. He threw the javelin and did the high jump. As a junior he placed 2nd in state for the high jump at 5'11". He also wrestled during his Junior and Senior year going to state both years and losing to a guy from Parkrose and a guy from Oregon City. He only played football in his Senior year. He was a defensive linebacker. One time when his mom and sister Martha attended the game, he made 5 good tackles to stop the offence from advancing. In 1952, Willy bought a 1944 Ford car that he used to drive all over and to work at the Pendleton Woolen Mills, in Milwaukie. He had saved \$300,

from peeling Chittum bark at his Uncle Ozzie's place and by picking up bottles along the road.

Willy was drafted in 1951, yet he was still in high school. His mom took him to a courthouse in downtown Portland and asked the Judge to delay Willy's entering the service so he could finish high school. She told the judge that her son Max, Willy's older brother by 7 years, was drafted into the Navy and was not able to graduate and she wanted Willy to graduate. The judge agreed and a few days after graduation in 1953 Willy flew off to boot camp for the US Navy in San Diego, CA. Willy met Billy Webb while in boot camp together they were stationed on the USS Hornet. The 2 country boys traveled the world getting into and out of all kinds of scrapes and troubles. They remained lifelong friends. Willy always liked to talk about his Navy days. He always said, "You don't know the kind of life I had."

October 26, 1956, Willy was honorably discharged from the Navy due to stress, bleeding ulcers and other health issues. He returned home to Sunnyside and got a job with a Portland phone company. He had saved his money and was able to buy a 1954 Mercury sedan.

In the fall of 1957, Willy met Mary through a shared friend named Les Blinzman. They began to date and 3 months later were married on February 12, 1958. They moved to California where Willy had a job with the telephone company. The stay in California was short because they were to start a family and wanted to come back home to Oregon. Their first child Lisa was born in 1959. They purchased a home in Oak Grove and lived here for 14 years. They had four other children, David in 1960, Diane in 1961, Susie in 1964 and Jimmy in 1966. While at Oak Grove Willy became a journeyman sheet metal and gutter man with Columbia Sheet Metal and ran the very first continuous gutter machine in the area. He later started his own company in 1967 called

Custom Sheet Metal and later Custom Gutters in 1985. He and his employees put on many of the gutters in the Metro area.

In 1972 Willy and Mary got a veteran's loan and purchased a small farm in the Carus area. The country boy took the city gal to the farm where they built a house with 6 bedrooms in 1973. They raised cows, (20 was the most he raised), 2 horses, chickens, llamas, and later filbert trees. Willy liked to give the young men who came to date his daughters jobs to do before they could go on the date. And anyone else who came by and looked like they needed to do something. On the farm there were huge old growth tree stumps. Willy had a license to use dynamite to blow them up. He had Ed, Lisa's boyfriend, now husband, help him dig under an old tree stump to put a stick or two of dynamite under it. He lit the fuse and all it blew up was a root or two. So, he decided to use more. He used so much that the blast from the dynamite blew the stump all over with pieces landing even on the barn roof. It left a hole 15' wide and 10' deep.

Willy purchased hay equipment and had his employees and whoever else he could get haul hay for him. He even used his gutter trucks to haul hay. He also had them help with the cutting, raking and baling. One time Willy had to take a broken tractor over to Harmon and Gladys Blinzman's house on Larkin Road a few miles away. Mary was in the truck towing Willy on the tractor. He hollered all the way, but she couldn't hear him because she had the windows rolled up and just drove on. When they arrived at the farm, Gladys could not stop laughing at the sight. The tractor is still over at that place.

Willy also loved to go hunting since he was a boy. Throughout the years he hunted with his son David, Chuck and Kurt Vondross and Lyle Johnson. Willy was skilled with a gun and shot 2 bucks while he was running after them. They hunted in areas by Prairie City. At the headwaters of the river in that area was a bathtub that caught a trickle of water to fill it up. Maybe for the

deer to drink. Willy had threatened to get into the tub for years. And he finally did. Thinking the tub was warm he stripped down to nothing and hopped in. He quickly jumped out because the water was freezing. His holler could be heard throughout the whole valley! Willy also likes to sweat and would go down to Brownsmead where he would sit in the sauna with all the locals who became his good friends.

Some of Willy's favorite sayings: "Lisa, David, Diane, Susie, Jimmy whoever you are get over here." He said this when we were little. "What's your name? Do you want spanking?" He said this to everyone, which scared the grandkids when they were young. And Andrew's friend would bend over to get one. 😊 And Willy in turn would say, "Get outta here"

Many times when he was gutting a house and was on the roof he would scream, "The Indians are coming!" And everyone would look around and at him.

Willy was a hard-working man with a generous heart. He always helped the underdog. He was full of life and mischief. He will be greatly missed. He now resides in heaven with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

# Cemetery Details

## Mt View Cemetery

500 Hilda St  
Oregon City, OR 97045

# Previous Events

## Memorial Service

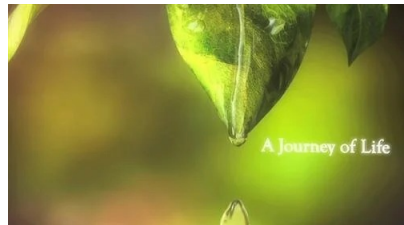
JAN 27. 11:30 AM (PT)

First Baptist Church of Oregon City  
819 John adams  
Oregon City, OR 97045

# Tribute Wall



“ Hillside Chapel created a Tribute Video in memory of Willy Konrad Kunze



Hillside Chapel - January 27, 2025 at 11:52 AM

KW

Beautiful tribute! I love seeing the family photos. ❤️  
Kim

Kim Williams - January 27, 2025 at 01:42 PM



“ 12 files added to the album Life Tributes



Hillside Chapel - January 27, 2025 at 11:07 AM

TB

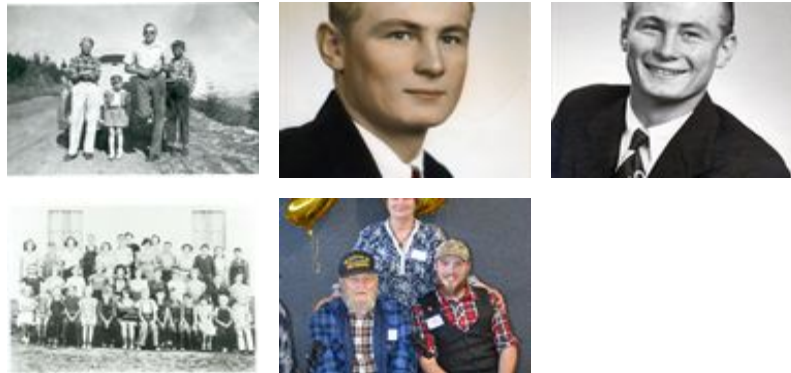
“ *What a wonderful tribute. I have many treasured memories at the farm. I did not realize uncle Les introduced Willy and Mary. There will be definite void in this family with the loss of Willy. Hugs and prayers to the Kunze family.*  
*Tracey Blinsman Bitz*



Tracey bitz - January 23, 2025 at 09:16 AM



“ *130 files added to the album Life Tributes*



Hillside Chapel - January 22, 2025 at 10:09 PM



“ *2 files added to the album Memories Album*



Hillside Chapel - January 22, 2025 at 05:46 PM