



Merrill W Howarth

May 9, 2026

Chief Master Sergeant Merrill Wayne Howarth, United States Air Force, Retired of Elberta, Alabama, passed away on May 9, 2026, at the age of 72. Wayne was a man who valued faith, family, loyalty, structure and so many joys of life.

Born February 5, 1954, Wayne entered the United States Air Force September 1, 1972, beginning his service at Keesler Air Force Base, Mississippi. Over a distinguished 21 year career, he served first on active duty as a Wideband Communications Equipment Technician and instructor, retiring from active duty in 1981. He returned to service with the Mississippi Air National Guard, where he served in Communications Electronic Systems for the 172nd Airlift Wing. He retired from the Mississippi Air National Guard October 1, 1997, at Thompson Field, Jackson, Mississippi, holding the rank of Chief Master Sergeant (E-9) - the highest enlisted rank in the United States Air Force, achieved by fewer than one percent of enlisted Airmen.

His decorations include the Air Force Reserve Meritorious Service Medal with one oak leaf cluster, Air Force Commendation Medal with one oak leaf cluster, Air Force Achievement Medal, Air Force Outstanding Unit Award with three oak leaf clusters, Air Force Good Conduct Medal, Air Force Longevity Service Award with two oak leaf clusters, National Defense Service Medal, Air Force Overseas Short Tour Ribbon, Armed Forces Reserve Medal, NCO

Professional Military Education Ribbon, and Small Arms Expert Marksmanship Ribbon. He also was recognized by the State of Mississippi with the Medal of Efficiency, War Medal, Service School Ribbon, and two Longevity Ribbons. Wayne was a graduate of the USAF NCO and Senior NCO Academies.

Throughout his career, CMSgt Howarth exemplified the Air Force core values of Integrity First, Service Before Self, and Excellence in All We Do.

Known for his strength, steady presence, and caring heart, he leaves behind many who loved him deeply and will forever cherish the memories shared with him.

Wayne was preceded in death by his beloved wife of 39 years , Deborah Painter Howarth; his parents, George Edward Howarth Sr., and Gloria Merrill Howarth; his brothers, George Edward Howarth Jr., and Mark Joel Howarth.

He is survived by his loving wife, Gloria Gray Howarth, of Elberta, Alabama; her daughters, Melissa (Trey) Gilfoil, Amie (John) Murphy, and Kristy (Ron) Barnes.

although Wayne had no children of his own , he shared a special bond with his nieces, Sherri DeFraitess and husband Chris, along with their son Austin, and Kimberly Braswell and husband Jeremy, whom he loved dearly.

Wayne will be remembered for his devotion to his faith, his enduring love for those closest to him, and the lasting impact he made on the lives of those fortunate enough know him. A graveside service will be held to remember and honor Wayne.

Arrangements are entrusted to Cason Funeral Service in Foley Al

Tribute Wall

CD

“ 5 files added to the tribute wall



Chris DeFraites - June 02 at 08:24 PM

CD

“ I cannot put into words the profound respect I have for Wayne Howarth. He was a great man and an exceptional friend. We have been through so much together in the last 25 years. He welcomed me into his family and allowed me marry his niece in the absence of his brother who passed before I met Sherri Howarth DeFraités. He commitment to his family is testimony of his character. He was there anywhere, anytime, for as long as it took. I grieve his passing from this world into the arms of my Lord Jesus. I know we see each other again but from this day until that, I will miss him greatly. My heart aches for my wife, my sister in law, my mother in law and his wife Gloria Gray Howarth. He was not sure if he could love again after passing of Debbie but he did and it is beautiful thing. Wayne and I shared a special bond as veterans, the surrogate father to my wife and as brothers in Christ. We spent hours together talking about his love for his family and Jesus over a glass a Tylenol 101. We went through multiple life events together from hurricanes to home remodels. He was always available for whatever life event we were going through. I will always fond memories and will forever miss him. 26 years was too short. I am fortunate and proud to call him friend.

Chris DeFraités - June 02 at 08:19 PM

SD

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Sherri DeFraités - May 29 at 10:25 AM

SD

“ 2 files added to the tribute wall



Sherri DeFraitess - May 29 at 10:22 AM

SD

“ 3 files added to the tribute wall



Sherri DeFraitess - May 29 at 10:11 AM

OH

Our sincere heartfelt condolences 🌸
Otilia and Aubrey Huval from Louisiana

Otilia and Aubrey Huval - May 29 at 05:13 PM

FA

“ Fishermen Sunday SchoClass FBC Foley AL
purchased the Sweet Tranquility Basket for the
family of Merrill W Howarth.



Fishermen Sunday SchoClass FBC Foley AL - May 13 at
12:15 PM