



William Adkins III

April 28, 1943 - August 20, 2025

William Milton Adkins III was born in Charleston, West Virginia on April 28, 1943. He spent his childhood in the small town of Dunbar, which he was to remember with fondness throughout his life. In 1956, his parents moved their family to Melbourne, Florida.

Young Will (known then to his family and friends as “Billy”) thrived in Florida, especially at Melbourne High School, where he studied science with his mentor and longtime friend, biology teacher Jerry Einem. Will won several prestigious prizes in biology, most notably his third-place finish in the national Westinghouse Science Competition in 1961. This came with a scholarship which enabled him to spend a year studying at Harvard, after which he returned to Florida, and graduated from the Florida Institute of Technology.

After graduate studies in Physics and Mathematics at the University of Florida and Florida State University Will took a job as a proofreader at Homes and Land Inc. He worked there and at its successor, The Printing House for a combined 30 years, in a variety of positions, including scheduling and graphic arts. Will joined the Unitarian Universalist Church of Tallahassee in 1974. He was active in church life, serving as chair of the Music Committee, scheduling volunteers for the Kearney Center, organizing the Old Sages breakfast meetup, and setting up coffeehouses and concerts where Unitarian Universalist talent could be showcased. He arranged concerts for charity

events, enjoyed parties, and was one of the founders of the Winterfest.

Will was devoted to creativity and the arts. He wrote poetry and prose works. He collected musical instruments. He played the recorder and wrote music for it. His sheet music was always decorated with his own illustrations. Visual art was his forte and he evolved from illustration to abstraction and from there to computer-modified images. He exhibited in a number of local galleries and museums.

Will died on August 20, 2025.

Will was preceded in death by his parents, William M. Adkins Jr., and Lou Ann Wright Adkins.

He is survived by his significant other, Amy Weiss, his sister, Sandra (John) Adkins Bailes, four nephews and one niece: William John (Dinah) Bailes, Robert Eric Bailes, Dan Franklin Bailes, Scott Alan (Dawna) Bailes, Cynthia Lou (David)) Rice. He is also survived by 22 great-nieces and nephews.

Cemetery Details

Tallahassee Memory Gardens

4037 North Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32303
(850) 562-1518
<https://www.abbeyfh.com/>

Previous Events

Memorial Service

SEP **19**. 11:00 AM (ET)

Abbey Funeral Home
4037 North Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32303
(850) 562-1518
abbeyfh@comcast.net

Tribute Wall

DK

“ Will was one of the first persons I got to spend time with when I started going to the UU Church in the mid 1980s. He was also one of the most interesting and friendly persons I met. He and his friend Henry led very innovative and memorable services from time to time. I'll never forget the time they both dyed their hair blonde before one of those services. That still gives me a chuckle.

I remember he told me that his job choice allowed him to often read while waiting for the next task to be done. He also loved the Prairie Home Companion show and recorded every episode for later enjoyment.

In one of his last acts of kindness to me, he let me take the lead role for a play performed at the church. Thank you Will for your friendly ways and spirit! I send my condolences to his family.

David Kelley

David K - September 21, 2025 at 10:49 PM

MS

“ I had the honor of knowing Will through the UU Church of Tallahassee for several years. Will was unfailingly gentle, friendly, and good-humored. He always had a kind word for friends and strangers alike, along with a passionate opinion about the issues of the day. He was a loyal, generous friend and a curious, engaged citizen of the world. He was wise and humble, gazing in awe at the big world as he pondered how to make it better. The last time I saw Will was during a visit to Black Dog Cafe, and he looked so happy. We are grateful for Will's life and will miss him so much.

Melinda Stanwood - September 17, 2025 at 10:18 PM

HP

“ *Will Adkins was sensitive, insightful, outrageous, artistic and more. A wonderful caretaker and giving person to his friends and community. Will, for those of us who knew you, we'll miss your physical presence, but you'll never be gone.*

Howard Pardue - September 17, 2025 at 07:04 AM

JL

“ *I fondly remember Will plushly dressed in period-appropriate velvet garb with matching head covering as a medieval recorder player in winter night-time church multi-generational celebratory concerts with soft mellow light strung around the sanctuary. He was the organizer of many such performances, especially his community-builder events at various times of the year gathering as many musicians, poets and storytellers as he could find.*

I first met William (Will) in 1962 watching WESH-TV out of Orlando. He had won the State high school science award while living on the East Coast and that School Board wanted to show him off. It wasn't until we both had been Unitarian Universalist Church of Tallahassee members for about 20 years that we both realized he was the guy in that old TV show.

In addition to being attracted to our church's Freethinker discussion group, Will also was our church monthly newsletter editor of the Meridian giving us refreshing ideas and great artwork.

As musician, artist, organizer and other attributes implied above, William added greatly to the historic culture of our church.

Joe Lama - September 16, 2025 at 03:54 PM

CR

“ As the family all well said he best uncle ever could have loved his hugs and kisses he liked be remembered by.

The shelves be lingering with the interest to see who the author was. Give the moment of a place to call home.

Christmas was so fond such a time to look forward see uncle Willy. Loving thoughts of you the prayer for your eternal salvation we had some fell asleep we did pray. In heaven we will see you we will come running to hug you.



CynthiaLucille Bailes Rice - September 14, 2025 at 06:21 PM

SB

“ To my loving brother "Billy" of 82 years - we grew up in Spring Hill & Dunbar WV in the 1940 and 50's. We then moved to Melbourne, FL in 1956 and finished Junior & High School. We grew up in a very loving home and were very close family. He was always very active in music and art and did very well in school. We always stayed in touch with each other even though we lived in different parts of the USA. He always visit our home - especially at Christmas time and had fun being "Santa Willy" to our 5 children. He spent a lot of time with them - taking the boys to the Mountains in Tennessee many times. They loved him very much. I'll always remember the wonderful times together and also his mischievous ways - always "pickin" on me! He was a wonderful brother always remembering me and also John (my husband) and calling us on our birthdays and anniversaries and special times. "I LOVE YOU BILL AND ALWAYS WILL AND I AM AND WILL MISS YOU"



Sandra Bailes - September 05, 2025 at 05:31 PM

NR

“ Will was very simply a beautiful human being.

Ned Ryan

Ned Ryan - August 28, 2025 at 10:02 PM

KG

“ Will was a wonderful brilliant, creative and welcoming force when I came to the Unitarian Church in Tallahassee and whenever I had the privilege of being in his presence since then. I’m sure he was welcomed by the Eternal Light when he returned from whence he came to sojourn with us.

Ken Gemmer - August 28, 2025 at 09:03 PM

JT

“ Will was a really strong advocate for getting volunteers to serve meals and interact with staff & people less fortunate. He brought joy to others through his advocacy. He will be missed!

Janet temkin



Janet Temkin - August 28, 2025 at 05:54 PM



“ To the family of Will Adkins, please accept my sincere condolences on your loss. - Lou Lobinske

Lou Pare-Lobinske - August 28, 2025 at 12:00 PM

KC

“ When I set up our phone answering machine, the cat inadvertently meowed at the end of it. Thereafter, Will always ended his messages with a big, loud "MEOW!" And then he'd laugh and laugh until he hung up. I'm so glad he liked that crazy cat's addition.
Kandy and Ron Crowe

Kandy and Ron Crowe - August 28, 2025 at 10:42 AM



“ *Small Garden Dish was purchased for the family of William Adkins III.*



August 28, 2025 at 08:49 AM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of William Adkins III.

August 28, 2025 at 08:49 AM

JB

“ I met Billy, when he was 12 years old. I was dating his only sister and would often go to her house one night if the week on Friday or Saturday to spend time with her. Billy would always find some way of watching us to see what we were doing in their kitchen. His sister, Sandy and I married and began to have children. That made Billy an uncle which he took very seriously and began to play a part in the lives of his nephews. Billy was famous around Christmas when he became Santa Willy. When we moved permanently to live in Chattanooga TN, Bill would come and bring gifts to his niece and his four nephews. As our son's grew older, he began to take them with him to the Smokey Mountains to explore and camp. They have never forgotten their adventurous experiences with their Uncle Billy. After our children were grown and raising their own families he was always asking about them. Bill was always greatly interested in what his sister and I were doing and where we were going. I was in the gospel ministry as a missionary director for Baptist International Missions located in Chattanooga TN and it required me to travel all over the USA and sometimes outside the US. Bill would call us and want to know where we were traveling and the details of the city and church where I was speaking. We would send pictures and sometimes I would send him links to gospel messages I had preached. He would tell me that he enjoyed listening to the messages and that I was a good preacher. As his health declined, he stopped traveling and so our visits became less frequent until the only times we saw him were when we would go to Florida in the winter and plan a stop in Tallahassee on our way north for a visit with him. Our last time with him was while he was recently in the hospital. I will never forget how he responded when he saw me come to his bedside. He threw up his arms and grasped my hands and said with a loud voice, John Franklin Bailes, I love you. I responded with I love you too Billy. My hope is that he loved my God as much as he loved me. We will miss his calls and expressions of love and concern for us.

John F. Bailes - August 27, 2025 at 02:08 PM

“ *My dear Family and Friends of my one and only Uncle Billy,*

I'm sure that each of us has had grieving moments over the last week upon hearing of the passing and experiencing the loss of William Adkins III.

In my toddler years between 1966-1968, I was famously known for attempting to call my uncle's name, which elicited his famous chuckle and beautiful grin at my calling him "Uncle Bully". A bully he was not but rather a big teddy bear and loving compassionate man he was to all he met especially to us, his nephews and niece the only children of his sister Sandra. He would visit us yearly or invite us to visit him Florida and loved to smother us with hugs & kisses and enlist us to give him his necessary annual head scratching that my mom and I also would enjoy receiving over the years.

He most definitely made an indelible imprint on us and in his unique Uncle Billy way gave all of us a much greater appreciation for books, music, art, puzzles, critical thinking, faith talks, open communication, humor, plant life, nature, gardening, libraries, used book stores, antiques, classic cars, Astro vans, and the great outdoors. Out in the mountains he was famously known to command his talkative nephews to stop in our tracks and listen while hiking through the Smokey Mtns. and ask us, "What do we hear??" We would say, "Nothing" and he would say, "Exactly!" He often tried to promote us being quiet occasionally and meditatively take in what we would have missed when we weren't focusing on being still and silent for periods of time.

He also did everything in life with constant humor, a classic grin, and a love for laughter. He would often want me or my brothers to just look at him and wonder what is he going to tell us next? Then he would inform us of some simple little revelation that should have been more obvious to us but he was catching on the details that most were missing. He liked to often stick out his tongue and would make the best goofy face to get us to laugh or smile. He was

famously known by us so many for his trips in winter to surprise us around Christmas with his red cap on and a bag full of gifts in tow and announcing his arrival with, "Ho, Ho, Ho - Santa Willy is here!" He was one of a kind and he was intentional in making every visit a celebration of love and cheer.

My brothers and I had boyhood adventures of a lifetime with Uncle Billy in the mountains and visiting him down on the beaches of sunny Florida. I remember vividly trekking up Mt Le Conte with my uncle and my brother Dan back in our college days and then camping in tents with him in the Smokies. On our first night there we were awakened in the middle of the night by black bears moving about, hungrily sniffing and growling no doubt wondering how to get inside our tents all because Uncle Billy had to have his snack of peanut butter before he went to bed.

It seemed that he and I only had a visit here or there together after that in the late '80s and early 90's whenever I would make my way through Tallahassee or he would stop by Mom and Dad's in Chattanooga headed to the mountains. With being outside the country in Latin America for around 20 years I didn't get to see him much after that. Although we would talk on the phone on a rare occasion, the last time I remember us seeing each other was at his mother's, Mama Lou's funeral when I traveled back from Mexico so many years ago.

I was thankful that I heard that he did get my card just the other day and hopefully our connection was still there after all these years. I loved my Uncle Billy and felt always and ever so loved by him. He will be missed.

Scott Bailes

Scott Bailes - August 27, 2025 at 01:30 PM

SB

“ 6 files added to the tribute wall



Scott Bailes - August 27, 2025 at 12:54 PM



“ To me, he was never William Adkins. He was always Uncle Billy. And to him, I was always Bijo. That was the name he gave me when I was young, and he never stopped using it. That kind of affection tells you something about who he was—someone who built bonds that lasted a lifetime, someone who could make you feel cherished with a single word.

Uncle Billy was one of the most brilliant men I have ever known. He loved books, science, math, music, art, and nature—and above all, he loved people. His mind was vast and curious, but it was never cold or distant. His brilliance was paired with warmth, laughter, and a joy for living.

Much of my interest in science, nature, music, and literature, I owe to him. He provided opportunities for me, whether it was through books, music, or simply sharing a story or a smile. The seeds he planted in me continue to grow, and they will keep bearing fruit for as long as I live.

He wanted to live out Emerson’s call: “To be yourself in a world that is constantly trying to make you something else is the greatest accomplishment.” And he did. He never swayed from that. He showed me, and all of us, what it means to live authentically—to walk through the world true to your spirit, and in doing so, to inspire others.

He loved humor. He laughed often. And in that laughter he found the essence of love. For him, joy was never separate from kindness, and wit was never separate from warmth.

Uncle Billy was brilliant, yes—but more than that, he was a good man. To have been his nephew, to have been his Bijo, is one of the greatest honors of my life. His voice, his laughter, and his love will stay with me always.

Love always, Bijo

John Bailes - August 27, 2025 at 12:23 PM