Willow Award

EXCELLENCE IN END-OF-LIFE CARE

4/5/2026

To the Willow Award Committee,

It is with overwhelming gratitude and deep emotion that I nominate **Jordan Simpson, RN, with Elite Hospice in Bryant**, for the extraordinary compassion and care she gave our father, **Terry Merrill**, in the final days of his life.

Our dad was only 54 years old, far too young for his final chapter, yet he lived more life than most people ever will. He was a United States Marine, a boots-on-the-ground kind of man, strong-willed and fiercely independent. He often told stories of special operations missions in Colombia, rappelling from helicopters, and the brotherhood he carried with him long after his honorable discharge. After his military service, he dedicated another 15 years to law enforcement, continuing a life defined by courage, service, and unwavering strength.

Dad was never one to run to a doctor. Even as advanced osteoporosis and a broken shoulder in 2022 led to a steady decline, he remained stubborn, proud, and determined to live life on his own terms. In 2023, he and our mother sold everything they owned, bought an RV, and took off to live the life they dreamed of. Just 13 months ago, we built an RV pad at my home so they would always have a place to come back to when they were in Arkansas.

Dad's one unwavering wish was simple: **he wanted to die in his RV, beside his wife, surrounded by the people he loved.** He made it very clear that he did not want a hospital, did not want an emergency room, and would only agree to hospice if no one forced him out of the RV.

On Friday, our family made the call to Elite Hospice. From the moment Jordan entered our lives, she became our center. In what would become an incredibly fast and heartbreaking journey, Jordan helped keep all of us grounded. Dad remained lucid until Tuesday, and by Wednesday, he peacefully took his last breath.

Jordan was there through it all.

She was kind in a way that cannot be taught. She met Dad's stubborn humor with warmth and laughter, honoring not just his medical needs but his personality. Dad had a way of making everyone laugh, even when discussing death. He often joked that he wanted his ashes placed in an alien urn. When Jordan asked him why, he smiled and said, *"Because I'm out of this world."* She didn't dismiss his humor—she joined him in it, helping us all find light in the heaviest moments.

Most importantly, Jordan made his final wish possible.

Because of her advocacy, compassion, and unwavering presence, our father was able to die exactly where he wanted: in his RV, beside his wife, with peace, dignity, and love. Jordan stayed with us until his final breath. In those sacred moments, she held space for our grief while somehow keeping us centered enough to simply be his family.

Our dad was the kind of man who would rather spend time with his people than chase money. He was the grandfather who got on the floor to play leapfrog with his grandkids, the hunter who loved duck season, the protector who always showed up when advice was needed, and the kind of man whose humor could make you laugh through tears. Jordan saw *all* of that. She cared for the whole man, not just the patient.

I have never met a nurse like Jordan Simpson in my life.

In just five days, she gave our family a gift that will live with us forever: the peace of knowing our father's final wishes were honored and his passing was filled with dignity, love, laughter, and grace.

For the way she cared, the way she stayed, and the way she made one final dream possible, Jordan is more than deserving of the Willow Award.

With heartfelt gratitude,

Family of the late Terry Merrell 🌿