



1/3/2026

To the Willow Award Committee,

My husband, James A. Wise, and I were married for 64 beautiful years before he passed away. That kind of love builds a lifetime of memories – and when the end came, we prayed it would be peaceful. Because of Heather Lane, RN, it was more than peaceful. It was sacred.

Heather was our nurse through Hospice Homecare in Bryant, Arkansas, and from the very beginning, she was humble, kind, and so very human in the sweetest ways. She was not just doing a job. She was caring for us – all of us.

The day before James passed, Heather came by for a little while. Up until that point, he had not been talking much at all. But after she left, something remarkable happened. James began talking to the Lord almost as if He were standing right there beside his bed. It was as clear as day. He named the family members who had gone before him. He spoke their names one by one. It was holy. It was peaceful. It was something our family will never forget.

Later that night, around 11:00 p.m., I went in to check on him again. I gave him a hug and a kiss and told him I loved him. To my surprise, he clearly said, "I love you, too." It was the last thing he ever said to me – and it is a moment I will carry in my heart forever.

When James passed, our German Shepherd, Sheba — who was his whole world — cried like a baby for four or five minutes. It was as if she knew. It was heartbreaking and beautiful all at once.

When Heather arrived, she did something I will never forget. She chose to wait until the rest of our family arrived before officially calling his death and contacting the funeral home. Most hospice employees would not have done that. It was late. I'm sure she had her own family waiting for her at home. But in that moment, she thought about us more than she thought about herself.

She even stayed after the funeral home came and took James — just standing with us, loving us, like she was one of our own family members.

Heather brought a little bit of life back into our home that night. Through her gentle conversations and even a little laughter, what could have been only sorrow turned into something else. It became a celebration of a life well lived. I remember her saying to us, "You know where he is going." And she was right. We did know.

We all thought so much of her that several of us even joked we wanted her phone number just in case we needed her when it was our time.

Heather was a blessing assigned to us. Precious to every member of our family. Because of her humility, compassion, and willingness to put the family first, one of the hardest nights of our lives became one of the most meaningful.

For 64 years, James was my great love. I am so grateful that in his final days, we were given a nurse who treated him — and all of us — with such dignity, tenderness, and grace.

Heather Lane represents the very best of end-of-life care. Our family will never forget her.

With heartfelt gratitude,
Wanda Wise
In loving memory of James A. Wise