



Forrest Neal Runnels, Sr.

March 29, 2026

Forrest Neal Runnels, Sr., 88, of McAllen passed away in San Antonio, Texas, on Palm Sunday, March 29, 2026, with his family at his side. Neal was born February 1, 1938 in Harlingen, Texas, to Billie Ruth and Forrest Wilson Runnels. He was the youngest of two children, having an older sister, Jane.

Neal grew up and attended high school in Harlingen, Texas, and graduated from Southern Methodist University (SMU), in 1960. He lived and worked in Dallas until 1965, when he returned to Harlingen and joined his family business, Valley Beverage, where he felt blessed to have worked alongside his father and three sons.

In 1967, Neal married Gayle Southerland of Harlingen. They made their home in McAllen where they began a wonderful life filled with so many lasting friendships. In August of 2027, Neal and Gayle would have celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary. A testament to their faith and commitment to each other and family.

Neal embraced the culture of South Texas - the people, its traditions — he

carried that affection forward in everything he did. Neal treated everyone the same, with courtesy and respect. His honesty was absolute — he would tell you the truth, even when it was not easy to hear. His door was always open. Neal was easy to trust. His family and his many life-long loyal friendships were a paramount priority to him. Neal never missed the opportunity to use his quick wit and sense of humor on his friends and family. Those who knew him....knew all too well. Neal was guilty of having fun and enjoying life, always. He had a way of bringing happiness and light into a room, as he drew people together. Neal had much respect for the outdoors and the ocean where he enjoyed shooting shotguns, quail hunting and scuba diving. He had a love of jazz music, fast cars, motorcycles, and the open road, which he tended to enjoy at a pace that tested posted speed limits. He favored the color red, was fortunate to have traveled, and was known among close friends and family for his habit of whistling — quietly, contentedly, to himself. Neal was a member of First United Methodist Church in McAllen and the First Global Methodist Church of Mission, where he demonstrated his love for the Lord not just in words, but through the values and principles he lived by, each day. He took great pride in his commitment to the community. He found pleasure in supporting many worthwhile organizations

and charities

throughout his life. Neal believed it was important to invest in and give back to the community

that had given him and his family so much. His idea was simple: if you can help, it is your

responsibility to do so. Neal was generous; he enjoyed helping with his time and resources.

It was a highlight for Neal to serve on the boards of the Vannie E. Cook, Jr. Cancer Foundation,

Texas State Bank, Palm Valley Animal Society, and the Wholesale Beer Distributors of Texas,

where he served as President for a time.

Neal is preceded in death by his parents, Billie Ruth and Forrest Wilson Runnels and sister Jane

Runnels Clark. He is survived by his wife, Gayle, their three sons, James Howard (Jamie)

Runnels, San Antonio, Texas; Forrest Neal (Lorin) Runnels, Jr., San Antonio, Texas; and Nicholas

Barrett (Lindsay) Runnels, Jacksonville, Florida; Grandchildren Chandler Runnels (Graves)

Cowsar, Dallas, Texas; Forrest Neal Runnels, III, William Cullen Runnels, San Antonio, Texas;

Wilson Steele Runnels, Madeleine Graham Runnels, Barrett Jackson Runnels, Jacksonville,

Florida, plus great-grandson Campbell Graves Cowsar; niece Gwen Clark (Jeff) Fulk and nephew

Ike (Sue) Clark of Raymondville, Texas.

A Memorial Celebration of Life will be at 10:00 a.m., Saturday, April 18, 2026, at First Global

Methodist Church, 1101 Doherty, Mission, Texas with a reception immediately

following at

DoubleTree Suites by Hilton, 1800 South Second, McAllen. Memorial

contributions may be

made to Vannie E. Cook, Jr. Cancer Foundation, 101 West Expressway 83,

McAllen, Texas,

78503-1341; First Global Methodist Church, 1101 Doherty, Mission, Texas

78572; Palm Valley

Animal Society, P.O. Box 1829, Edinburg, Texas 78540. May his memory be a blessing.

Previous Events

Service

APR 18. 10:00 AM (CT)

First Global Methodist Church
1101 Doherty
Mission, TX 78572

Reception

APR 18. 12:00 PM (CT)

Double Tree Suites by Hilton
1800 South 2nd Street
McAllen, TX 78501

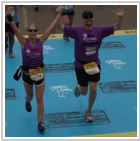
Tribute Wall

SH

“ Neal was a great guy and I was honored to know him when I lived in McAllen. He treated all as if he had known you all his life. Prayers to family.



Sam Hogue - April 26 at 06:23 AM



“ I was blessed to know Neal. Kind, friendly, joyful and generous are just a few personality traits I greatly admired in Neal. Separated by decades, his unpretentious personality made it seem like we were friends where time did not factor. In my life there are only a handful of men I would point my sons to emulate, he was one! Thank you, Lord, for our friendship and the example Neal provided to us younger men about how to serve God, our families and community!

Bill Martin - April 10 at 11:17 PM

JB

“ Neal was one of a kind. He and I were friends for 70+ years, after playing basketball together for the Harlingen Cardinals. Neal checked all the boxes: He was a great friend, son, father, husband, sibling, and businessman. On top of that, he had a great sense of humor. In his younger days, he was a bit of a harmless prankster. After college, he took his time finding the perfect mate. He found her! He and Gayle made a wonderful couple raising a fine family and still taking the time to travel all over -- including hitting the best scuba diving spots in the world. I am privileged to have called Neal a good, loyal friend all these years. I am just so pleased he and Gayle joined a group of us on the Island in October '25. It was great visiting with him. He was in great spirits despite what I knew were his health challenges. It was the last time I saw him. He and Gayle fought a courageous battle for 5 years, but I guess God decided it was his time, as Gayle said, to 'get his wings and speed around heaven'. Rest in peace, my good friend Skeeter.
John Bourg HHS '56

John bourg - April 08 at 06:44 PM

JL

“ Wonderful guy. Met him when I worked at McAllen Coca-Cola. Further enjoyed our times with Greeters and other organizations. Prayers for the family. John Launder

John Launder - April 08 at 05:52 PM

AH

“ A GOOD guy has died. They just don't make them ANY Better. I Will Miss His sense of humor, and his Friendship. Met him in 1974 and since have thought the World of Him. My Condolences to the Family. Alter Holand, McAllen

Alter Holand - April 07 at 04:07 PM

MB

“ I am so sorry to hear of Neal's passing. My thoughts and prayers go out to his family.

Myles



Myles Beeching - April 06 at 02:03 PM

MS

“ I just met Neal and Gayle Runnels in October of 2025 at a RGV Memories Get Together at South Padre Island. I am so glad to have met them, and my life was enriched in knowing them even though briefly. Neal reminded me of my Uncle Delbert Runyon and was a true gentleman. God bless the family in their hours of grief. Rest in Peace Neal.

Madeleine Gilbert Spangler - April 05 at 12:31 PM

CB

“ I have known Neal for some 50 years or so. Being a State Game Warden our paths crossed each other many times in the field as well as lunch in McAllen. What a joyful person to be around as I so enjoyed his company and the many friends that we shared. I last talked with him at Calvin Bentsen's funeral. Wish I would have had more time to visit with him longer back then. He was a friend of mine.

*Capt. Ken L. Baker (retired)
Corpus Christi, Texas*

Capt. Ken Baker - April 03 at 02:35 PM