



Mr. Jess V. Essex

July 15, 1951 - September 14, 2025

Jess V. Essex, 74, of DeWitt passed away unexpectedly Sunday, September 14, 2025. He was born July 15, 1951, in DeWitt to Jack Walton Essex and Meredith Cooper Essex.

After graduating from DeWitt High School in 1969, he served in the U.S. Navy for 6 years aboard the submarine, The Sea Devil. He enjoyed his time in the Navy and still talked about the friends he made during that time. After his honorable discharge from the Navy, he spent a few years living in New England before graduating in 1981 from John A. Gupton College of Mortuary Science and going home and joining the family business. He and his brother, Cooper, were the third generation to own and operate Essex Funeral Home.

Jess was well known for his singing and was always willing to share his talent. He enjoyed playing the guitar, and kept one in several local restaurants just so he could pick one up to play and sing if the mood struck him. He was active for many years in the South Arkansas County Fine Arts Council and took part, in some way, in most all of their productions. He enjoyed singing with the Arkansas Choral Society and taking part in performing operas in Memphis.

He had a great love for duck hunting and enjoyed every hunt, even if no ducks were killed. Even flying down the bayou in his boat, he was known to be bellowing out a song or two!

He enjoyed telling a story, the longer the better and usually with a couple of side stories included! If you heard his stories, take them with a grain of salt because he liked to add a little dramatic flair for a more enjoyable story!

Jess served on the DeWitt City Council and South Arkansas County Library Board for many years, and was a member of DeWitt Rotary Club, where he was a past president and Paul Harris Fellow. He was a lifelong member of DeWitt Methodist Church, and sang tenor in the Chancel Choir at church for most of his life.

He was preceded in death by his parents Jack and Meredith Essex; sisters Loma Sue and Sarah Essex; and his niece Loma Essex.

Jess is survived by his children Tim and Tonya Essex and Elizabeth Essex; his grandchildren Alister and Rachel Essex; his brothers Stewart Essex (Jeannette) and Cooper Essex (Connie); three nieces Kimberly Lock, Ashley Schrunk, and Laura Essex; and many other dear family and friends.

Visitation will be from 5-7 p.m. Tuesday, September 16 at Essex Funeral Home. Funeral services will be Wednesday, September 17 at DeWitt Methodist Church with burial in DeWitt Cemetery.

Memorials may be made to DeWitt Methodist Church Building Fund, 608 S. Grandview Dr., DeWitt, AR 72042 or to DeWitt Cemetery, 871 Essex Rd., Almyra, AR 72003

Cemetery Details

DeWitt Cemetery

DeWitt, AR 72042

Previous Events

Visitation

SEP 16. 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM (CT)

Essex Funeral Home
1405 South Grandview
DeWitt, AR 72042
(870) 946-3104
<https://www.essexfuneralhome.com>

Service

SEP 17. 2:00 PM (CT)

DeWitt Methodist Church
608 S. Grandview Dr.
DeWitt, AR 72042

Tribute Wall

PS

“ I knew and loved Jess from our time together singing with the Arkansas Choral Society. He had a tremendous tenor voice and a vast store of tall tales that he would share freely. He will be remembered as a gentleman and scholar who loved to sing. Paul Siitonen, Little Rock, AR

Paul Siitonen - September 27, 2025 at 10:56 AM

ZL

Thank you, Mr. Jess. You gave me that big hug I needed every time, when that's all I needed.

Zach Landon - January 17 at 02:35 AM

AT

“ Prayers and love to the Essex family during this difficult time. I only met Jess a couple of times, the brother of my dear friend Sarah. I know they are together carrying on and telling stories. How I loved the Essex's stories. Love from Texas, Atha

Atha Thompson - September 20, 2025 at 09:22 PM

RS

“ Our thoughts and prayers are with the family. Mr. Jess, as we called him, was one of a kind. We are better for knowing him and I have an education of Arkansas county even though I didn't grow up there. God bless him and his family. We thank you for the memories and professionalism you gave us for years. The staff of Arkansas Central Mortuary.

randy sharpe - September 17, 2025 at 09:08 AM

MD

“ Jess has been my friend since we were in fourth grade. He never met a stranger and always gave his best to us all. Thomas Hardy said, “Slowly losing friends is a part of growing up. We don’t lose friends, we just learn who the real ones are.” Jess was a real friend. Praying for the loss of this friend in our lives. Mary Ann Luckie DuMond

Mary Ann DuMond - September 16, 2025 at 11:11 PM

PD

“ Prentice And Sue Davis lit a candle in memory of Mr. Jess V. Essex



Prentice and Sue Davis - September 16, 2025 at 12:39 PM

PD

Mr. Jess will surely be missed... A good man for sure.

Prentice and Sue Davis - September 16, 2025 at 12:39 PM

PS

I just looked for Jess on the internet, fearful of what I might find. He did not answer my texts as he usually does. He was my last surviving Navy shipmate from the USS Mount Whitney days, a fine and brilliant friend, full of life, song, and warm friendship. Jess, I will miss you terribly. In the great beyond, when we meet again, have those ducks flying low and sing loudly when you see me approach. Fair winds and following seas old buddy.

Paul H Shaw, Harriman, TN

Paul Shaw - September 24, 2025 at 01:06 AM

GD

“ So sorry to hear about Jess. He was such a joy to be around and always lit up the room where ever he was. He will be dearly missed.

Gail Doles - September 16, 2025 at 11:01 AM

ED

“ Loved Jess and his many history lessons and stories!! He was fully knowledgeable of both!! Jess will surely be missed by a lot of family and many friends!! ❤️❤️🕊️🕊️



Ester Hageman, LPN DCH - September 16, 2025 at 10:04 AM

E(

“ Very sorry to hear about this loss. My thoughts and prayers are with the family.

Emili Brooks (Morehouse) - September 15, 2025 at 08:30 PM

RM

“ When I was a young teenager, I discovered that I loved to sing. I knew that my friend Jess did, too. Like many teenagers our age, we didn't want anyone to know that we liked to sing. I caught Jesse singing the way I liked to sing, in a way that no one would catch us singing. We both loved to bellow out our newly changed voices. We sang only when we were moving lawns. But one day while walking past the lawn he was mowing, I noticed to my horror that his voice was much louder than the lawn mower. Little did I know that Jess would become a reknowned singer and that I would become locally known for singing with children. Thank God for lawn mowers (and for Jess!) --Ronnie McDonald

Ron McDonald - September 15, 2025 at 06:03 PM

LD

Oh my! Where to start? Jess was the first love of my life! We were 15! He was funny, friendly, and, kind. Well, and loud. Amazingly gifted. We had more fun together than any two teenagers should have had, in the 1960's. Jess and my momma, Elizabeth Terry, adored each other—both were gifted musicians. My memories of Jess will always be special! To Jess' family and other friends. I am asking The Holy Spirit to pour His peace and contentment, comfort and joy, down over each of us, like warm honey! Blessings!—Libbie Terry Dougan

Libbie Terry Dougan - September 16, 2025 at 10:08 PM



“ *Medium Dish Garden was purchased for the family of Mr. Jess V. Essex.*



September 15, 2025 at 03:21 PM

GG

“ *Our thoughts prayers are with your family during this time of loss. May God hold you close and give you strength, peace, and comfort at this time of mourning.*



*Greg and Laura Griffie
Kansas City*

Greg Griffie - September 15, 2025 at 07:50 AM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Mr. Jess V. Essex.



September 15, 2025 at 01:54 AM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Mr. Jess V. Essex.

September 15, 2025 at 01:54 AM



“ My father was the minister of the Methodist Church, and we consisted of five boys. The Essex boys and girl were down the street from us, and Stewart, Jess, and Cooper were our playmates. If there was no upcoming funeral, we were allowed to play hide and seek in the chapel. It had lights that you could brighten and dim which made for great hiding places. If the chapel was occupied, there were plenty of play spaces in and around DeWitt. I can't think of anything other than good memories in our time with the Essex kids and their parents. I am so sorry for the family. You have suffered a great loss. My prayers are with you.
David McDonald

David McDonald - September 15, 2025 at 01:42 AM



With deepest sympathy. Prayers for strength and healing during this difficult time.
Trey Scherwitz

Trey Scherwitz - September 15, 2025 at 04:08 PM

NG

Shocked and saddened by this news. The Essex family has been there for myself and my family many times over the years and have always been very good to us, along with our church family in Dewitt. I attended school with the Essex boys during my younger years and remember a lot of good things about the family. Prayers for all of you that you have peace and comfort from God.

Nelda (Kagebein) Godwin - September 16, 2025 at 08:13 PM