



CELEBRATING THE LIFE AND LOVE OF
Edward A. Wilbers

May 16, 1948 - June 12, 2025



Edward “Ed” Wilbers was born on May 16, 1948, in Covington, Kentucky, and raised in Fort Thomas as the oldest of four children, Kathy, Peggi, and Pam. Ed’s childhood was full of the kind of stories that reveal a boy with wit, curiosity, resilience, and more than a few scrapes along the way.



His family had a couple of cows, and more than once, the school had to call over the loudspeaker to let him know they’d escaped, again, and were wandering the streets of Fort Thomas – or at least that’s the story he told! He always blamed his persistent back pain from being kicked by one of the horses he was told to break. But he always told that story with a grin that made the pain seem like just another punchline. His love for the outdoors extended to fishing and camping, especially with his close friend Mark with whom he went on many adventures.

Summers found five-year-old Ed tagging along at his father’s construction sites, developing an early interest in the family trade. By high school, Ed was already working in construction for his father, laying the foundation, literally and figuratively, for the career he would one day lead. One of the most retold stories from that time involved his father asking him to dig a pond so the animals could have better access to water. First, the shovel got stuck. Then the tractor. And finally, the bulldozer- each attempt sinking deeper than the last, proof that his persistence sometimes outpaced his luck. It was a classic Ed moment: stubborn determination, a bit of misadventure, and a great story by the end.



He loved building things, but it was music that stirred his soul. With a natural ear for music and growing talent, Ed started playing the piano in bands as a teenager. At 16, he landed a keyboard gig at the infamous Flamingo Club in Newport, until his father found out and quickly put a stop to it. But the experience only deepened his passion for performing music, a love that would bring him, and others, countless moments of joy in the years to come.

Ed attended St. Thomas School for elementary and high school and went on to study at Villa Madonna College in downtown Covington, later renamed Thomas More College. He enjoyed the city atmosphere and joked that he lived on White Castle sliders during his first two years there. He earned a degree in accounting, though his professional focus remained on construction. In his early twenties, he took over the family homebuilding business, where he built a successful career.

Ed's life changed forever when he met Martha on a blind date. Wearing a navy peacoat and driving his mom's Oldsmobile instead of his work van, he showed up to a porch full of giggling women. Unsure which one was his date, he asked in typical Ed charm, "Is one of you Martha?" Their first date was to a pizza restaurant, and it marked the beginning of a marriage that lasted over 51 years. Martha was drawn to Ed's wit, intelligence, curiosity about her world, deep love of music, and the way he poured himself into every hobby and story he told. They married on April 5, 1974, and spent the next 51 years side by side- playing mixed tennis doubles, sharing time with friends, golfing, exploring new places, and going to band gigs together.

Ed and Martha raised four children, Eddie, Jennifer, Julie, and Jessica. After Julie was born, doctors were surprised to know that there was another baby coming. Martha was carrying twins! She still recalls the moment after Jessica was born and she looked up at Ed to see a huge grin spread across his face.

What an unexpected joy! Just as unexpected, the Cincinnati Bengals were playing in the Super Bowl that same afternoon and the twins were dressed in later dressed by the nurses in Bengals outfits.

The family's early years were full of energy, with four children under the age of five. They went on camping and beach trips and their house was always bustling with friends, neighborhood kids, and family. Ed cheered on his children at countless sporting events and school activities.



He beamed with pride when Jennifer and Jessica's soccer team went to the state tournament, Eddie and his tennis partner won the regional doubles title, and Julie was awarded a Fulbright scholarship to Germany. His kids inherited his sense of humor and liked to tell the story of how he somehow managed to drive them to school every day with a hot cup of coffee miraculously balanced on the dashboard, never spilling a drop. He never missed a chance to tell his children how proud he was. Especially when Eddie followed in his musical footsteps. There's no greater duet than that.

Fourth of July became a sacred family ritual for the Wilbers family at his parents' home - a lively gathering that brought the entire extended family together. The two-day celebration was filled with laughter, barbecue, drinks, swimming, and singing by the bonfire. Ed, Eddie, and some of the cousins would play music and one special tradition involved the entire family rolling on the concrete or grass as they played Proud Mary and the words "rolling on the river"

came on. As night fell, the kids would put on choreographed dance routines before the sky lit up with fireworks with everyone gathered around the bonfire for s'mores. These joyful traditions were among Ed's most treasured memories, moments that captured the warmth and spirit of his family life.



He was known for his sharp eye for detail, whether in construction, storytelling, or the intricate maps he drew for his children before they traveled anywhere. Long before GPS, his hand-drawn directions were famously precise, with no arrow or intersection left behind. He had a deep love of history and an even deeper desire to understand the world around him. He always wanted to know everything, where you were going, what the building

looked like, how you'd get there, and he asked questions with genuine interest. He loved watching sports, classic films, western's, romantic comedies... you name it! His favorite cocktail was a Manhattan, his favorite book was The Frontiersman, and he ordered pork chops at almost every restaurant. He quoted often from his favorite show Seinfeld and watched the movie Tombstone a few too many times.

Many families still live inside the walls he raised as a homebuilder and his family business helped shape the landscape of Northern Kentucky. Yet the jobsite radio was never far away. Through the decades, he was in several bands such as Handle With Care, Ooh La La & the Greasers, and The New Lime, whose group was inducted into the Northern Kentucky Music Legends Hall of Fame in 2014. For several years, he was also a member of the charity group Suits that Rock, performing with his friend Mickey and other local musicians at the Carnegie in Newport.



He could play Elton John in the basement, lead singalongs at the piano bar during parties, or bring the house down at the river camp with a toy keyboard by the fire. And when he could no longer play, he would still sing, with a proud grin, alongside his son Eddie's band, belting out Honky Tonk Woman like the showman he always was.

In later years, Ed became a loving grandfather to nine grandchildren, now ranging in ages from 9 to 22, each of whom he adored. He also maintained strong ties with close friends who remained by his side until the end, often taking him to lunch or other outings they knew he would enjoy.





He cherished his weekly breakfasts with his friend Kenny, which became a meaningful and consistent part of his routine.

Ed's faith was reflected in the way he loved his family, treated others with kindness, and lived a life of integrity, attending church regularly alongside Martha and showing his beliefs through quiet acts of care and compassion.

About 15 years ago, Ed began showing signs of cognitive change and was diagnosed with dementia five years ago. As his condition progressed, he faced the challenges with grace and strength and remained the same witty, open-hearted man who could light up a room with a smile or a story. He continued to be fairly independent and engaged in most activities until a significant decline in October of 2024. Despite the progression of the disease, Ed recognized his loved ones until the end. He passed away peacefully at home on June 12, 2025, surrounded by family.

He will be remembered for his humor, his warmth, his unwavering love of family, and the music that was the *soundtrack to a life well lived.*





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