

Funeral services will be conducted 12 Noon Tuesday, Feb. 26 at the Hermitage Funeral Home in Old Hickory for Joe B. Perry, 86, of Mt. Juliet. Perhaps best known locally as the former director of the James E. Ward Agricultural Center, Mr. Perry died Friday, Feb. 22, 2013.

The family will receive friends Tuesday from 10 a.m. until the service. Funeral services will be conducted by Pastor Lee Stevenson. Interment will follow in Hermitage Memorial Gardens.

Retired after 40 years with the United Methodist Publishing House, Mr. Perry took on management of the Ward Center in 1983 and remained affiliated with the "fairgrounds" until his second retirement in 1994.

During Mr. Perry's tenure as director, the Agriculture Center changed dramatically from just one building and an old barn to new attractive permanent buildings for community residents to use for the fair and other events such as meetings, reunions, anniversaries, camping conventions and more.

Mr. Joe and his late wife Wilma, personally cared for the grounds, and built flower gardens for everyone to enjoy.

"Their commitment and untiring dedication of years ago helped to make the James E. Ward Agricultural Center what it is today," said Larry Tomlinson, present Executive Director of James E. Ward Agriculture Center.

The Perry Building was named in honor and recognition of Joe and Wilma Perry, August of 1994, for their dedication and contribution to the James E. Ward Ag Center.

"Mr. Joe and Wilma took a great amount of pride in the Ag Center, working many long hours, were always friendly and wanted everyone to feel welcome," said Hale Moss, President of the Wilson County Fair.

"They made sure every detail was cared for and always wanted everyone who visited to be happy and comfortable. Today, we enjoy the fruits of their labors they contributed years ago." Mr. Perry was a World War II Navy veteran and a member of Cook's United Methodist Church.

Survivors include: children JoGale Ray and Ron (Lura K.) Perry; grandchildren Jamie, Chelsea, Krista and Kelly as well as two great grandchildren.

Mr. Perry was preceded in death by his wife, Wilma N. Perry.

Memorial contributions may be made to Cook's United Methodist Church, 7919 Lebanon Road, Mt. Juliet, 37122.

Arrangements were in the care of Hermitage Funeral Home & Memorial Gardens, Old Hickory.