



Clifton "Louie" Lewis Bell

December 27, 1951 - April 7, 2019

Clifton Lewis Bell ("Tiger Lou", "Big Daddy"), 67, left us Sunday, April 7th to join his Mama and his beloved TOM - the tiger.

Louie was born December 27th, 1951, minutes after his twin sister Lucy.

Louie leaves the love of his life (his words), his wife, Julie Conway Bell; his twin sister Lucy Bell Butler and her husband and Louie's best friend and partner-in-crime, Larry Butler; beloved niece Jennifer Spaulding; brother Clark Bell III (Rip); stepfather Jere Reid; Aunt Rosemary Norfleet and many Mississippi cousins.

He was predeceased by his parents: Clark W. Bell, Jr and Claire Jamison Reid. And by his grandparents: Rev. Clark and Irene Bell; Clifton and Louise Jamison.

Louie retired from the City of Memphis, Parks Division as Big Cat Keeper at the Memphis Zoo after 46 years. He was the longest continuous employed staff.

Louie was most proud of the fact that he raised the original TOM - the tiger mascot of Memphis State University from a cub until TOM's death in 1992. He took TOM to all of the football and basketball games during that time. He loved TOM.

Louie started his zoo career early as a child at the free circus working the pony track for Tommy O'Brien and as a clown! He became an official zookeeper in 1971 and remained so until he retired in 2017 after 46 years.

Over the years, working at the zoo, Louie cared for not only cats but bears, sea lions, hoofstock, elephants, and more. In 1976 Louie took an elephant downtown to see President Gerald Ford. He also took a camel to see Jerry Lawler when he wrestled the Sheik at the Coliseum.

Louie's love of animals spilled over into his personal life as well. He always had dogs, cats, horses, birds, goats, etc.

Louie's enormous heart and boundless sense of humor will be remembered by so very many people. Louie LOVED to talk to and joke with people wherever he went. There are cashiers and waitresses who will never be the same! Louie never forgot anyone he met.

Louie and Julie THANK with all their hearts everyone who helped take care of him. Especially Dr. William K. Walsh and the nurses at Baptist Cancer Clinic and his longtime good friend, Dr. Robert Kraus, whom he loved and was always reassured by.

Louie will be missed more than he knows by more people and animals than he knows.

Visitation will be Friday April 12th from 5pm - 7pm at Canale Funeral Directors, 2700 Union Avenue Extended. Funeral service will be 10 am Saturday, April 13th at St. Therese Little Flower Catholic Church, 1644 Jackson Ave.

Memorials can be sent to St. Therese Little Flower Catholic Church; Memphis Zoo; or Lifeblood.

"Oh Me"

Events

APR **Visitation** 05:00PM - 07:00PM

12

Canale Funeral Directors

2700 Union Avenue Extended, Memphis, TN, US, 38112

APR **Funeral Mass** 10:00AM

13

St. Therese Little Flower Catholic Church

1644 Jackson Avenue, Memphis, TN, US, 38107

Comments



“ What a great man he was and had such a love for animals...thoughts and prayers to the family.



Michelle Tribble - April 12, 2019 at 11:03 AM



“ Emerald Garden Basket was purchased for the family of Clifton "Louie" Lewis Bell.



April 12, 2019 at 10:15 AM



“ Basket Full of Wishes was purchased for the family of Clifton "Louie" Lewis Bell.



April 11, 2019 at 04:49 PM



“ Louie. The truest friend that ever was.

I was young, and quite alone in the world when I met Louie. I was going through a challenging time in my life, but I had just landed a job in paradise. Well, it was paradise to me. The zoo had always been where I thought I should be. At the zoo we took breaks at 10 and 2, and had lunch too!. I didn't know what a break was until my job at the zoo. You see, I was a young mom who watched several other kids before I got this job. It was at these beloved breaks when I met this grumpy soul. His name was Louie. He portrayed a gruff persona, but right away I saw right through it. He was one of kindest soles I've ever met.

Everyday 10 and 2. Our friendship grew. We'd talk about animals, and life and scooping poop. I learned so much from my dear friend. He even taught me how to drive..... a steer. Lol Yep. He had me gee and hawing all over that farm. All I was lacking was the cart. Lol

There was a little caspian stallion that had never been worked with. With Louie's guidance, I had that stallion bowing for visitors. That stallion went from a flighty beast to a trusted participant in a special needs program where visually impaired children could pat him all over. People were amazed by this animal. It was Louie's magic that made it all happen. The knowledge that man had stored up in that head of his was nothing short of amazing. I learned so much more from him than animal behavior. I learned what it was to have a true friend. Few people get to experience the richness of a true friendship. I am blessed beyond measure to have known him. When he passed, he left a hole in this world that no other could possibly fill. Louie Bell, you are one of a kind. Thank you for your friendship.

Your Farm Friend, Laura

Laura Tumminello - April 10, 2019 at 09:04 PM



“ I remember him coming home and talking about you and training that stallion. :-)

Jen Spaulding - April 11, 2019 at 04:42 PM



“ My heartfelt condolences to the families for their loss.

Steve Peck - April 10, 2019 at 03:15 PM



“ Britney, Erika & Bethany purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Clifton "Louie" Lewis Bell.



Britney, Erika & Bethany - April 10, 2019 at 02:26 PM



“ Louie was and is and always will be the LOVE OF MY LIFE.
- Julia

Julie Bell - April 09, 2019 at 10:20 PM



“ John Goodman lit a candle in memory of Clifton "Louie" Lewis Bell



John Goodman - April 09, 2019 at 10:20 PM



“ I'm Louie's sister-in-law. It didn't take long for Louie to feel part of the family when he and Julie first got together. My mother only got to meet him once before she died but I remember her talking about how nice he was. Louie made me laugh and I loved that he was a zookeeper. He made my sister very happy. I will miss him so much.

Meggan Conway - April 09, 2019 at 06:32 PM



“ My thoughts and prayers are with the family at this time.

Michelle Tribble - April 12, 2019 at 11:01 AM