



James Monroe Coley Jr.

February 11, 1951 - October 10, 2021

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James Monroe Coley, Jr., born February 11, 1951 in Houston, Texas, died October 10, 2021 in Memphis, Tennessee, where he made his home for 69 years. He was a graduate of Messick High School, received his bachelor's degree at Memphis State University and his M.Ed from University of Memphis. Jim was a member of the Highland Church of Christ, where he attended with his family.

After obtaining his bachelor's degree, Jim was the Theater Manager at the Orpheum Theatre. During that time his love of the theater and arts grew and even then, he involved himself in lobbying for funding to refurbish the aging theater. He was a founding member of FOTO (Friends of the Orpheum). He was creative, a great storyteller, played drums, loved music of many types, especially early rock & roll, jazz & blues.

Jim lived his life selflessly; his greatest joy came from giving joy or aid to others. From humble beginnings and personal experience of struggles in school, he was inspired by one teacher who noticed his love of current events and brought Jim a copy of the newspaper each day to read. This led to the two paths of service his life would eventually take – one in education and one in politics.

Jim's love of current events and political policy was fueled by the influence of professors in the political science department at Memphis State. He formed life-long relationships with those professors, who encouraged his critical thinking about public policy

He went on to teach Government, History and Modern political thought, first in the Memphis & Shelby County School systems for over 20 years, as well as an adjunct professor at University of Memphis. He served the people of state of Tennessee for 14 years in the state House of Representatives, District 97.

During his term as a Representative, he made time to listen to EVERYONE, even those with differing opinions! (he loved discussion of ideas)! Jim was a champion to those in need and found many ways to help his community. Perhaps his most notable achievement was in passing legislation to curb human trafficking and to help those affected by domestic violence.

By far, Jim's most important role and joy came from watching his children, Erin and Evan, from infancy to adulthood. He will be remembered for telling bedtime stories, into which he inserted them along with Bilbo Baggins; coaching soccer when no one else was available, even though he didn't know the rules; practicing baseball and playing catcher; hopping around the house Easter morning; singing the "Good Morning" song, "Red, Red Robin" Toot-Toot-Tootsie Goodbye". At the end of the day, their happiness mattered more than anything else. In that same way, everyone was his family.

Jim leaves his immediate family, Paula Bittle Coley, Erin Emily Coley, Evan Andrew Coley, Tera Bradley, two grandsons, Owen & Merritt, and one beloved golden retriever, Folly. He also leaves many members of the Bittle and Edwards families, and those privileged to be considered family and called Aunt or Uncle.

Preceded in death by his parents, Wilma Josephine (Edwards) Coley and James Monroe Coley, Sr.

Memorial service will be 11:00 a.m., Monday, October 18, at Highland Church of Christ at 400 N. Houston Levee Rd, Cordova, TN, with reception to follow. The family will be available at 10:00 a.m. for visitation.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that memorials be made to Restore Corps (<http://www.restorecorps.org>), 1548 Poplar Avenue, Memphis, TN 38104. Restore Corps is a local organization that exists to eradicate human trafficking.

Comments



“ Mr. Jim, as I referred to him, was the sweetest nicest, most caring empathic, gentle and giving man I have ever met. From the minute he moved in the Parkview he made so many friends especially friends of those residents with doggies. His baby girl, Folly, loved him so much, he trained her to be kind and gentle as well. The Bible states "to be absent in the body, is to be present with the Lord." I have no doubt where Mr. Jim is. I know he will hear the Lord say "well done thy good and faithful servant." He loved his children deeply and his grandchildren. He talked about his children and their accomplishments and how proud he was of them. His cancer diagnosis was such a blow to him and his family. Even here at the Parkview, when we didn't see him we were always asking one another have you seen Mr.Jim today? Wonder how he us doing today. I myself saw him the night before, and he was in such awful pain it broke my heart to see him suffering. As much as it hurts those left, I truly feel like the Lord heard our prayers for him and he won the battle for him" I myself prayed his pain would subside so he could enjoy his life however long, but the Lord must have needed him more. It isn't goodbye, it's see you later Mr.Jim. I pray we can all learn by your example what it means to be a true and faithful servant. Love and see you later Mr.J

Marilyn "Cissy" Ward - October 12 at 09:46 PM