



Dr. Jesse O. McKee

April 28, 1941 - July 15, 2023

Dr. Jesse O. McKee, affectionately known as “Rusty”, passed away peacefully surrounded by his family on July 15, 2023. He was 82. He was born in Sligo, Pennsylvania but spent most of his early life in Clarion, Pennsylvania. He was preceded in death by his parents, Russell L. and Grace M. McKee and his wife of 54 years, Janet Hollenbaugh McKee. He is survived by two adult children, Russell McKee (Theresa) of Hattiesburg, Mississippi and Pamela McKee Kelly Purvis (Russ) of Conway, Arkansas. He is survived by four grandchildren Clinton Kelly (Meredith) of Carrollton, Georgia, Katie Kelly (Cody Hubanks), John McKee, and Sam McKee of Hattiesburg.

He is also survived by his aunt, Ruby Kameron, of East Brady, PA, his uncle, William “Bill” Buzzard of NY and his sisters-in-law, Dorothy “Dot” Over and Nanci Hollenbaugh Snyder both of Clarion. He leaves behind a host of Pennsylvania cousins, nieces, nephews, and dear friends whom he cherished very much.

Jesse graduated from Clarion High School in 1959. He then earned his BS degree from Clarion State College and his Masters and PhD from Michigan State University. He joined the Geography Department at the University of Southern Mississippi in August of 1964. He taught at the University of Southern Mississippi for thirty-nine years before retiring in 2003. During his career at USM, he published over 10 books, 25 professional articles and obtained over 1.5 million dollars in research grants. He served as the Chairman of the Geography Department from 1985 to 1996. During his career

he also worked for the National Geographic society conducting summer workshops with teachers throughout Mississippi. During his career, he was recognized often and received awards such as USM's Excellence in Teaching Award (3xs), Outstanding Service Award, and the Southeastern Division of American Geographers Lifetime Achievement Award. In 2015 he was inducted into the Mississippi Council for Social Studies Educators Hall of Fame.

Jesse was of the Methodist faith and enjoyed his family to the fullest. Earlier in his life he enjoyed playing basketball and was a Pennsylvania high school state champion in track. While working at Southern Miss, he continued playing basketball daily with his colleagues, "The Lunch Bunch". He also enjoyed playing golf, fishing, traveling, and reading books. Traveling with his family as well as professionally took him to Africa, Europe, the Caribbean, and much of the United States. The family believes that Jesse's love for traveling began at a young age. When he was around 12 years old, he and a neighborhood friend hitchhiked from Clarion to Cleveland, Ohio (150 miles) to catch several Cleveland Indians' games. We are unsure how they managed to finance such a trip, were allowed to stay in a hotel, and how they navigated their way to and from Cleveland, but like his mother, we are just glad he made it home safely. Jesse also enjoyed model railroading, collecting Lionel trains and was an avid sport car owner and enthusiast. Jesse loved his native state of Pennsylvania, and after retirement, he and his wife Janet spent numerous summers in Western Pennsylvania enjoying time with their family and friends. He could usually be found at The County Seat or Deb's Diner on those trips home. Gathering with childhood friends and family were the bright spots of each visit. He enjoyed his friends at his daily coffee groups as well as his friends at the Moose Lodge.

The Robert V. Burns Funeral Home in Clarion is overseeing the arrangements. Family and friends will be received from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. on Sunday, August 6, 2023 at the First United Methodist Church in Clarion. The memorial service will follow at 3 p.m. with Reverend Jodie Smith presiding. Inurnment will immediately follow in the Clarion Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations in Dr. McKee's memory be made to the Department of Geography through the Foundation at the University of Southern Mississippi (601-266-5210), the Department of Geography at Clarion University of Pennsylvania (814-393-1610), or to a charity of your choice.

Cemetery Details

Clarion Cemetery

Clarion, PA

Previous Events

Visitation

AUG 6. 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM (ET)

First United Methodist Church
600 Wood Street
Clarion, PA 16214

Memorial Service

AUG 6. 3:00 PM (ET)

First United Methodist Church
600 Wood Street
Clarion, PA 16214

Tribute Wall

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“ 4 files added to the album Dr. Jess McKee - "Papa" ”



Cody Hubanks - March 28, 2024 at 12:54 PM