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Dr. James Arthur Richardson

Oct. 10, 1941 - Feb. 16, 2023

Dr. James “Jim” Arthur Richardson, age 81, died unexpectedly at his home on February 16th, 2023.

Born in Wilkesboro, North Carolina on October 10, 1941, he was the son of the late Braxton and Beatrice Richardson. He was also preceded in death by his brother, Braxton (Mary) Richardson and his sister Linda (Wayne) Parker.

Jim was a devoted, supportive, and loving husband and father. He was loyal to his family and friends and never met a stranger. He was also very kindhearted, generous, compassionate, and constantly reached out to help others. He believed in the importance of an education, and he encouraged all ages to pursue their dream.

Jim received his bachelor’s degree from Appalachian State University, master’s degree from East Tennessee University, and doctoral degree in higher education from Duke University. He graduated with honors and was inducted into the Phi Beta Kappa national honor society.

Jim began his career as a basketball coach at West Wilkes and Wilkes Central high schools and then Naples Senior School. He moved on to coach at Isothermal Community College and later at Austin Peay State University. He is most known for his career working North Carolina State Department of Community Colleges as

his career working North Carolina State Department of Community Colleges as Director and a career that spanned 25 years at Western Piedmont Community College as President until his retirement in 2005. Upon his retirement Jim was given the title of President Emeritus and honored through the renaming of the 200-acre East Campus as the Jim A. Richardson campus, a scholarship in his name as well as the Long Leaf Pine Award.

An active community supporter, Jim served on numerous local, state and national boards. Some of the local boards that he served include: First Citizens Bank, Hospice of Burke County, Morganton Day School, Friends of Wilson Creek, and the Enola Group. He also was Past President and Chair of the Burke County United Way, President of Burke County Friends for Animals, President of Former Athletes Association of ASU, President of Master Gardeners, and President of the Blue Ridge Horseman's Association. In addition, he served as Chairman of the Renew the Tradition Committee and recently Chairman of the J. Iverson Riddle Development Institute Foundation (2012- 2023). Jim was a well-known speaker for various conventions, primarily on sustainable fund development.

Jim active member of the First Baptist Church of Morganton, serving on various committees. Other recognitions include: Wilkes County Hall of Fame and North Wilkes High School Hall of Fame.

Jim was the owner of Mule Creek Trading Company and President of the Richardson Group. Basketball and golf were his favorite sports. A man who enjoyed the outdoors, Jim was an avid trail rider that in the past could often be found on his horse or mule with his friends throughout the United States. He was very content to be at his farm... gardening, tending to the animals and socializing with friends and family. Jim was an avid reader and thoroughly loved history. He also became quite a chef at home.

Jim is survived by his wife, Jan Hendrix Richardson; daughters Pate Richardson and Melissa Morelli (Jim); granddaughter, Alysa; sister, Nancy Church (Don); and numerous nieces and nephews

A memorial service will be held at noon on February 25th at the First Baptist Church of Morganton. The family will receive friends in the fellowship hall immediately following the service.

In lieu of flowers, memorials and donations can be made to the Jim A. Richardson Scholarship (Community Foundation of Burke County (CFBC-BEEP Richardson) PO Box 1156, Morganton, 28680 or Assure the Future, Inc., 300 Enola Road, Morganton, 28655.

Sossoman Funeral Home and Crematory Center is assisting the family with the arrangements.

Tribute Wall

I met Dr.Richardson many years ago when I worked at Western Piedmont CC, He was a wonderful person and very down to earth. I ran into him many times at the grocery store, he never hesitated to speak to you when he ran into you, I just found out about his passing and it saddened me , I know that he is and will be missed by family and the people who he touched, my thoughts and prayers with his family Jan and Pate ,

–gabi mclendon

Jim Richardson was an outstanding person with a captivating personality. He spent his life helping people improve their lives- many of those years through the NC Community College system. Our thoughts and prayers are with Jan and Pate. K. Ray and Glenda Bailey

–K. Ray Bailey



I met Mr. Jim when he would come in Carbon City Grill with "The crew". Such a sweet man. He kept me laughing. He will be greatly missed. To his family my prayers are with you all during this time. Daphne caldwell Carbon City Grill

–Daphne caldwell

I am so sorry to hear this news. Jim was a great friend while we were students at ASU and our time as community college presidents.

—Jim Reeves

I bought a horse, or two, from Jim years ago. We rode together and he introduced me to his other friends. I was new to the area and he made me feel welcome. He

was unassuming, warm and generous with his time and knowledge. The world has lost a wonderful soul. My sympathies to his family and other friends.

—Pat Hill

Hello, Jan. I first met you two at an American Association of Community Colleges' Presidents Retreat in Breckinridge, Co. You two stood out as an inspirational couple who loved serving others and lived life fully. Jim gave me advice about the North Carolina Community College System and it was very helpful as I transitioned from Colorado to North Carolina. Jim was a friend to everyone and had a servant's heart. This is a great legacy that the rest of us aspire to achieve. May God bless you and your family during this challenging period. Beth and I will be praying for you.

—Tony Zeiss

Jim Richardson was a great friend and colleague. We met early in our careers as community college Presidents, and with his great wife Jan spent many great times together. He could always make us laugh, and his smile and great nature, made him a star in any situation. I was asked by Jim near the end of our careers to come to Morganton to give the commencement address at his college. It was one of lifes rewarding experiences, as I could see the impact he had on not only the college but also the community. Everybody smiled when Jim came around. I will never forget the descriptions of his infamous mule rides, and the community residents he did them with. The world will miss Jim Richardson and not many come along who could have the same impact. May he enjoy many heavenly mule rides. Lynn and I share deep sorrow with Jan and Pate.

—Tom and Lynn Thomas

We are so sorry to hear of his death. He was a great man and did lots of fine work for the Community Colleges. Mike Latta

—Dr. E. Michael Latta

Jim was a dear friend who introduced me to the wonderful mule world. He shared his two prize mules with me and still has our beloved mule Lucy. He was a distinguished educator and a friend who cared for everyone he met. He will truly be missed. He loved his family and would do anything for them. Sincere sympathy and prayers for Jan and Pate. Love, Linda Barker, Vanceboro, NC.

—Linda Barker

As an Norwegian Exhange-Student at Freedom High School 2003/2004, I was lucky to come across Jim. When I needed a new home over there, Jan and Jim took me into their family. Jim treated me as his own daugther, supported me and was always there when I needed a hug or a good advice. I will forever be greatful for the way Jim took care of me my year abroad. He was a special man with a very big heart. My deepest condolences to his family and friends. Love, Liz

—Inger-Elisabeth (Liz Abelsen)

Jan and Pate: James, Jacob, Preston and I are saddened to hear of your loss and the passing of a great man and inspiring leader. I think of things he shared about living the life of a servant leader every day. Wishing you comfort and peace always, The Callaways

—Cyndie Hagaman Callaway



Sending heartfelt condolences and prayers to Jim's family and friends during this difficult time. Jim's natural leadership and genuine passion to serve folks in the community will not be forgotten, and will be missed. I will fondly remember Jim as a class act, who could speak to

fondly remember Jim as a class act, who could speak to anyone on any level. A big hearted human being with a surplus of natural charisma. People that spent any time around Jim were better people for getting to know him.

–Trent Ramsey

Jim (Coach) I was a member of the first high school basketball team at West Wilkes that you coached. Due to an injury I received in football, I was only able to play about half of the season, but your influence on me has lasted a lifetime. I recall many things you did and said that encouraged me during my senior year, and actually helped me to choose a career in education, and most certainly in coaching. To be called coach to this day is a title I proudly carry. To make it mean even more, I taught and coached at North Wilkes, the high school that you graduated from. One final comment that has more meaning than you will ever know is the night you were inducted into the North Wilkes Hall Of Fame, I was also inducted the same evening. What a fantastic honor. to stand beside the man that I admired so much. You were simply one of the best my friend. Thank you for everything Coach. Charles (Coach) Wooten

–Charles Wooten

Jan, so very sorry to hear of your loss.

–Gloria Smith

To Jan and Pate, I send my sincere sympathy and love. I am so sorry for your loss. I am so saddened to learn the news of Jim's passing. He was a good man, a good friend, and I hold the best of memories in knowing him. Prayers for you both.

–Mary Dawn Stuenkel

–Ami O'Neill



Jim will be sincerely missed. He was selfless, giving and a natural born leader! His presence will be missed in every room he has ever entered! His kindness was only outweighed by his vision. Jim you will be forever missed!

—Kathy W Johnson

We have lost one dam good man , friend , father , he would give you the shirt off his back a would go out of his way to help anyone I mean anyone ! Jim “Doc” Richardson thank you for all that you have done for me an my family I’m so thankful you where in my life leading a guiding me through the good a bad . I will miss you more than ever my friend I Love ya Doc my you rest in peace

—Bryan “PeeWee” Whisenant

Dear Jan and Pate - I am so very sorry about Jim’s passing. What an unbelievable husband, dad, and community leader! He clearly lived with kindness and strength, and loved so very well. My many prayers - Martha Causby

—Martha Causby

Jan and Pate: Sending condolences and hugs to you ladies. May you find strength in the days to come when the calls, emails and visits have ceased.

—Debr Fleming



My sincere condolences to Jim's family. I worked with him at Western Piedmont Community College. May God bless each of you during this most difficult time in your lives.

—Diann Thomas Tate



To Jan and Pate: I know your Heart hurts. Our heart hurts.



Jim Richardson was a wonderful man. You will have so many memories of this special man. He loved both of you with all his heart. He always had his family at the center of his being. A true friend he was. A character full of an intruding, loyal, electric energy and a good man. My

experiences with Jim was a highlight in my life. Robert and Lynn Boggs

–Robert and Lynn Boggs

A fellow former basketball player at Appalachian State. Jim was a great individual as well as I got to know him. Enjoyed being around him at our basketball reunions and other events. He will be missed! My deepest condolences to his wife and family.

–William Sposato



Jim, Hey Neighbor! You left such an impact in my life. I remember when I first got home from Iraq, you and your family opened your arms to a complete stranger and his kids. I am ever so thankful for meeting you. Thank you for showing me your farm, the side jokes, lending a hand when I needed it and the funny convos. You knew EVERYONE!!!! If I needed something done you "have a guy"! It's been a pleasure my dear friend. God bless you and may God bless your wife and daughter. I'll never forget you. Take care neighbor, Aaron

–Aaron M Wilder

Dear Jan, family and friends, May our good Lord wrap his loving arms around you at this time of grieving. Always enjoyed the conversations with Jim. Heaven has gained a saint. Peace!

–Wayne Giese

When I was working in my front yard, Jim would sometimes stop by for a brief chat. He was always upbeat and fun to have a conversation with. He was a true asset to the town of Morganton and Western Piedmont College. He will be missed by all the people whose lives he touched.

–Mary Ann Riggs



Sending you all my love and continued prayers.

–Mikalea Taylor