



James Thomas "Jim"
Madison

Jan. 28, 1937 - July 25, 2026

James Thomas (Jim) Madison died peacefully July 25, 2026 in Morganton, North Carolina, after a major stroke. He was 89.

With Jim's passing all three of his boys have lost their best friend and mentor. They all three got to spend quality time with him in Charleston, SC, hallowed ground for the Madisons, over Fourth of July Weekend. And they all spent time with him the day of his stroke. He was the same guy the afternoon before his stroke as he was on the day each of them were born. His passing marks the end of an era. The three boys know that their life's work will be to honor his legacy.

Jim was born January 28, 1937, at Baptist Hospital in Winston-Salem, NC to Charles William Madison and Ila Belle Prevette Madison of Statesville, NC.

Jim enjoyed a 70-year love affair with Nancy Jane Craven Madison, who predeceased him by a mere 60 days. Jim met Nancy at Appalachian State Teacher's College (now Appalachian State University) and she was his life's companion. They were married September 14, 1958 and lived a loving relationship that was the envy of all who have known them. They had three sons, Charlie, Sam, and Jamie, and four grandchildren, Will, Anna, Lucie, and Stella.

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Jim spent two years of Army service, much of it at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, where Jim and Nancy lived in Tacoma Park, Maryland, and then several years in industry in Statesville, NC. Jim returned to school in 1972 at Francis Marion College (now Francis Marion University) in Florence, SC for pre-med studies. He received his MD degree, at the age of 41, from the Medical University of South

Carolina in Charleston, SC in 1978, the oldest person to be admitted to MUSC since the Korean War.

Jim served pediatric residency training and worked as a pediatrician, specializing in developmental disabilities, in Statesville, NC and Morganton, NC until his retirement.

Jim and Nancy had a splendid retirement together, traveling extensively and spending many winters in the Southwest, in Borrego Springs, CA and Ajo, AZ. Their late retirement was spent in Morganton, NC enjoying friends and family and the wonders of the foothills.

Jim marched to the beat of a different drummer. In his senior year at Statesville Senior High School, he was awarded the yearbook superlative "Most Original." Jim thought it meant "Weirdest," and that might have been right. Jim seldom let the expectations of authority figures limit his horizons. He had many varying interests.

He took up rock climbing in high school. He taught others to climb and helped to recruit and train a generation of North Carolina climbers. He spent hours climbing with his dear friend Buddy Price, of Greenville, SC, who went on to become a pioneering legend in the sport. Much of his old climbing equipment is in the North Carolina Climbing Museum.

He loved cars. He was most proud of his 1960 Austin-Healey Bug-Eyed Sprite, his 1981 Mazda RX-7, and later in life his 4-wheel drive vehicles: Toyota pickups and Nissan X-terras.

He raced motorcycles. Harleys, Ducatis, Triumphs, and Hodakas. Cross Country was his favorite event. It was the predecessor to Motocross. His boys spent many days at Love Valley, particularly enjoying the hill climb.

He became a pilot. He took his boys to the Bahamas in a single-engine Cessna 150

and a Cessna 172 and forged memories with them that have lasted forever. Along the way there were hours spent in airports getting to look at the Cessnas, Cherokees, Bonanzas, and Piper Cubs.

Jim became a sailor. He owned a Sunfish and a Thistle and sailed in Charleston Harbor. He raced in Regattas in Charleston and the infamous Rockville Regatta. He taught his teenage sons that the purpose of sailboat racing was to learn how to cuss. And to drink beer.

Jim was an adventurer. Vacations were sacred quests. Every moment was deliberate and to be savored. Watching satellites cross the sky in the mountains, roasting hotdogs on the fire, collecting firewood, building fires, a hike, all were sacraments. Every destination was hallowed ground. Huntington Beach State Park on Waccamaw Neck near Murrell's Inlet, SC, Johnson Seep in Utah. But Linville Gorge in Western NC is the navel of the world, as far as Jim was concerned. Getting a view of Table Rock from your bedroom meant Jim and Nancy lived in paradise.

He started his adventures early. When he was in high school, he and his friend Bob Lee, still of Statesville, NC, went on a quest in Bob's mom's Buick to New York City. They drove up to the Waldorf Astoria and asked for a room. The bellmen, knowing full well these were high school boys, asked how much money they had for a room. \$7 dollars. With wry smiles the bellmen said, "We'll get you a room." And they did. That night Jim and Bob went to Birdland and got to see Charlie "Bird" Parker.

Jim became a botanist. He knew the common name and the scientific name of almost every wildflower, shrub, and tree that grows in North Carolina, and Utah, and the Anza Borrego Desert in California, and along the border in Southern Arizona. He infected a host of others with his love of the flora of Western North Carolina, including many adventures with his camping companion Jim Thomas of Greensboro, NC.

Jim was a music lover. He searched out the most interesting and the most exotic collections of music genres that he could find. He passed that love for the most interesting, the most exotic music to his sons. And that love of "the most" was passed on to his grandson Will Madison who is an ethnomusicologist and music archivist. Jim was a long-time supporter of WNCW radio in Spindale, NC. They

opened his horizons.

Jim was a great friend. He kept his friends for life. He understood what quality time was and he showered his friends with it.

Jim became a spiritual advisor. Later in life, Jim did something extraordinary that almost no one else could do. When friends and family members had terminal diseases and death was soon to come, others fled. They couldn't bear the thought of the loss. Not Jim. When those times came, he was right there and he served as their spiritual advisor, guiding them and comforting them in the face of the inevitable. He got them ready and at peace. He gave them their last bath. Jim had said that having a good death is our last great accomplishment. And he saw to it that those he loved have had the benefit of that accomplishment. In Jim's final days, his boys continued the tradition.

Jim was a great father and grandfather. Known as "Deddie" to his sons, Charlie, Sam, and Jamie, he had the honor of being best friends with all three of them. It was a great achievement in itself. And over the past 30 years "Grandpa" got to have the same loving relationship with his grandchildren, Will, Anna, Lucie, and Stella.

Jim was asked by a waiter one time what was the meaning of life. Jim knew it was a device to get a better tip, but he told him just the same. He said, "42," the answer to that question from "Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy." The waiter actually got the joke, so Jim went on to say that the meaning of life is to have children. It is the reason we are here. It is the thing that gives life meaning. It is what makes us human.

Jim's sons, Charlie, Sam, and Jamie, will tell you he has passed on the meaning of life to them.

Not to diminish any of the above, Jim would have told you the greatest achievement of his life was that he somehow convinced that great beauty from Asheboro, North Carolina, Nancy Jane Craven, to marry him. It was a love that spanned 70 years. While many if not most couples come to live parallel lives where they seek to minimize their time together and to avoid intimacy, to the end, Jim and Nancy remained as close and devoted to each other as they were in 1958. They lived storybook lives.

Jim will be dearly missed by all. He is survived by son Charles Atlee Madison and his partner Joshua Benjamin Hinkle in Miami Beach, FL, Charlie's children, William Wright Madison and their partner Rin Ferraro, in Norman, OK and Conroy, TX; and Anna Hays Madison and her fiancé Curtis Murphy Haynes Mann in Lake George, NY; son Samuel Joshua Madison and his wife, Ashley Browning Madison, in Raleigh, NC, and his daughter Lucinda Pei Wen Madison in Mt. Pleasant, SC; son James Thomas Madison, Jr. and his partner Hannah Eckard in Morganton, NC and, his daughter Stella James Madison, in school in Oxford, MS; and cousin, Jan Hutchins in Raleigh.

The family has scheduled a joint grave-side memorial service for both Jim and Nancy for October 17, 2026, 2pm, at Oakwood Cemetery in Statesville, NC and a reception, beginning at 3pm at Twisted Oak, uptown in Statesville.

In lieu of flowers, Jim wished that memorials be made to the Tom Roop Scholarship at Francis Marion University, PO Box 100547, Florence, SC 29502, 843-661-1295, <https://connect.fmarion.edu/donate-new?fid=ieN2rVSEo3w%3d&fdesc=xq4a4dQuf7weP2%2bBOMSU6xhQ0MX6oKeJ>.

Sossoman Funeral Home and Crematory Center is assisting the family.

Tribute Wall

No tributes added yet.