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James William Helms

July 14, 1941 - March 1, 2017

James William Helms, 75, of Wesley Chapel, Florida, formerly of Morganton, died peacefully Wednesday, March 1, 2017 surrounded by his two daughters, brothers and family. James was born July 14, 1941 in Morganton, North Carolina the fourth son of the late Dr. and Mrs. Jefferson Bivins Helms, Sr. He loved being with his brothers as they grew up in Morganton, where they took advantage of the small-town atmosphere by bicycling all over town to meet with their friends for various sport gatherings and attend the local schools and churches.

In 1959, James graduated with honors from The McCallie School in Chattanooga, Tennessee. He attended the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He then enlisted in the U.S. Navy and served two years aboard the U.S.S. Rowan Battleship in the Pacific and earned an Honorable Discharge. He completed his college degree at Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina with a major in English.

James' career began in sales with Drexel Furniture in Chicago. He then moved on to work for Thomasville Furniture in New York, Atlanta and later became the head of sales for Florida. In 1980, he started Pacesetter, his own furniture import company, which imported mahogany and rattan furniture from Jamaica, the Philippines, and other places around the world.

James retired in Florida, close to his eldest daughter, Carrie, to live in the Wesley Chapel community. He landed his dream job as a retiree, working at the Lexington Oaks Golf Club, where he had friends and colleagues that loved and will miss him dearly.

Anyone that knew James knew that one of his greatest passions was golf. He was very fortunate and proud to have played many of the greatest golf courses in the world, his most recent being several courses in Ireland. At 72, he joined a club, not many can join, and shot his age, a fact he loved to share. He also had a passion for skiing, college basketball and football.

At 6'5", James would naturally catch people's attention when he walked in a room. But it was his personality, charm, and loving heart that would steal the show. He was a loving father, devoted brother and dear friend to so many. The cherished memories he has left us all will help to fill the emptiness that his death has left in all our hearts.

In addition to his parents James is preceded in death by his brother, Thomas Hudson Helms and sister-in-law Vicki Van Liere Helms of Winston-Salem.

James is survived by his former wife, Ann McNeely of Rutherfordton, NC, mother of his two daughters, Carrie McCollum Helms Smith of Wesley Chapel, FL, Ashley Catherine Helms Spicer and husband, Sandy of State Road, NC. Two dedicated brothers, Dr. Jefferson Bivins Helms, Jr. and wife, Edna, Robert Edward Helms, Sr. and wife, Victoria all of Winston-Salem, NC. James adored his five grandchildren, Lawton Alexander Smith, Wyatt Gabriel Smith, Brodrek Bivins Helms-Raj, Payton Elizabeth Spicer and Holden Blaine Spicer. There are many, many nieces and nephews who absolutely loved and adored their Uncle James.

James' ashes will be buried beside his mother and father at Burke Memorial Park at 2:00 p.m., Sunday, March 12, 2017 with military honors provided by the US Navy and the Caldwell County Veterans Honor Guard. A memorial service will follow at 3:30 p.m. at the First Baptist Church at 502 W Union St, Morganton, with Dr. Thomas A. Bland, Jr. officiating. The family will greet friends in the church parlor following the service.

Memorials may be made to Autism Speaks at act.autismspeaks.org, the Burke

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

Tribute Wall

No tributes added yet.