Sossoman
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John "Johnny" Roger Smith

Sept. 2, 1948 - June 26, 2022

John "Johnny" Roger Smith, 73, of Morganton, passed away at his residence, June 26, 2022, after a courageous battle with cancer.

Johnny was preceded in death by his parents, I.J. and Violet Smith and brother Jim Smith. Johnny grew up in the Drexel area and always enjoyed life to the fullest. He loved his family dearly and was so proud of them.

Johnny is survived by Sarah, his loving wife of 50 years, daughters Mandy Hice (Steve) and Wendy Smith, grandchildren Richard Hice (Ashlyn) and Zabrina Hice, and great-granddaughter Charleigh Hice. Others left to cherish his memory are his sister-in-law Beverly Smith, nephew David Smith (Jeni), double first cousins Sandy Herlihy and Joe Smith, and many other special cousins. A very special person in his life was his "kidney kin", Keisha, who gave him an additional 14 years of life by donating Johnny a kidney. He will forever live in the hearts of his numerous hot rod buddies and close friends who were like family to him.

Johnny was previously co-owner and operator of Small Engine Performance Center in Valdese. He later retired from the NC School for the Deaf maintenance department. Johnny could match any part of any antique car to its make and model at a glance and fix anything with an engine. Next to Jesus and his family, building and restoring

hot rods in his garage were his passions. He loved attending cruise-ins, hot rod shows, and old car flea markets. He was a founding member of the Roaring 20's — 40's Street Rod Association. He also loved music, especially Oldies from the 50s and 60s. He enjoyed playing many instruments, especially the guitar and banjo, and was in many bands in his younger years.

Johnny was always determined not to let any of the many medical challenges he faced in his life hold him back, starting with battling polio at the age of two. Even with being in an iron lung for two years, he defeated the odds to go on to work with his hands and build cars all his life. Due to polycystic kidney disease, he was briefly on dialysis before being fortunate to receive a live donor kidney transplant that allowed him to live a life without being tied to a machine.

Through all hardships, Johnny relied on his unwavering belief in Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior. He would encourage everyone to have a personal relationship with Jesus. Johnny was a life-long member of High Peak Baptist Church. He served many roles in the church, such as deacon, Sunday School Director and choir member, and he loved his Sunday School class members.

Johnny's sense of humor will be remembered by all who knew him. Johnny could make any situation comical to the point people would have to just stop and laugh out loud until they were weak and crying. He was making jokes and cutting up through the last hours of his life.

He is currently drag racing down the streets of gold.

The family would like to thank Dr. Michele Higerd (Piedmont Nephrology), Dr. David Abernathy (Morganton Internal Medicine), Dr. Steven Siciliano (Piedmont Plastic Surgery & Dermatology) and all of their staff members, as well as staff at Wake Forest Baptist Hospital (Abdominal Organ Transplant Team & Hematology and Oncology Team) for their personal care, concern, and compassion over the years. The family is forever grateful to Keisha for the extra life her kidney allowed him to spend with them.

The graveside service will be held at 4:30 p.m., Thursday, June 30, 2022 at Burke Memorial Park with Rev. Dr. Kevin Purcell officiating. The family will have a drive-through visitation at Burke Memorial Park from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. on Thursday

through visitation at Burke Memorial Park from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. on Thursday following the service.

Please drive your hot rods and antique cars in Johnny's memory. Please wear a mask when greeting the family.

Instead of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to High Peak Baptist Church, 3073 High Peak Road, Valdese, NC 28690 or the Polycystic Kidney Disease Foundation: https://pkdcure.org/.

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

Tribute Wall



It's been a little over four years since John died. I talked to him on the telephone about two weeks before he passed and he never let on how ill he had become. I hadn't visited with him for quite a few years. I kept telling myself that my next visit to NC would include a trip to Morganton to see him. I never made it and will regret it until I see him again. I had known him since 1966. He was my second longest friend, and I know if I needed something and he was able, he'd have been there for me. I know he's in heaven and hopefully I've lived a life worthy of joining him there.

–Harry Sherrill