



John Terry Smith

September 28, 1926 - April 20, 2020

Smith, John Terry, 93, passed gently on Monday, April 20. His was a life marked by genuine love, an insatiable appetite for sports, and an unparalleled fondness for any food full of sugar.

He was the best dad a kid could have, as evidenced by the advanced road systems he built in a backyard sandbox using toilet paper tubes and oatmeal containers; the years he spent coaching both his son's and daughter's teams; his enthusiastic (read competitive) participation in backyard games of baseball, basketball, football, badminton, Frisbee, and golf; and the fact that children came to his house to ask his wife if Mr. Smith could come out to play. He was just as stellar as a PawPaw, attending dance recitals and choir concerts, building swing sets and tree houses, reading books, giving horse rides on worn out knees, going to McDonald's on the way to school, going to Sonic on the way home from school, and going overboard on Christmas. He served in the Navy in World War II as a fireman and radar operator on a tiny man-made island in the Pacific, French Frigate Shoals. A gifted vocalist, he also sang in the Navy Choir and performed during its Sunday morning radio shows.

After the war he returned to college at Kentucky Wesleyan where he saw his future wife when "checking out the incoming freshmen girls" and said to a friend, "I'm going to marry that girl." He did marry that girl, Margaret Ann Duley, in 1951. They were together until her death in 2016, and are together now.

He went on to teach History, primarily at Valley and Stuart High Schools, for 30 years. He coached tennis and golf, chaperoned dances, and ran the time clock with precision at football and basketball games. One time he made a disco ball for a student dance out of broken Coca-Cola bottles; another time he constructed a flowing river down a staircase as a backdrop for prom pictures. He sponsored the state's largest Good News Club for students of the Christian faith, and his home was like a student center for Valley High in the 1960s.

He was a lay leader and pastored a small church for several years. He was instrumental in forming Southwest Community Ministries, an outreach committed to homelessness prevention, and became its first executive director in 1984. When he was 80, he retired from SWCM because, "I'm 80. I should retire." He continued as a lay leader in his church and was still teaching a Bible study in his home as recently as February.

A man of striking generosity, he often pulled money out of his own wallet to further help a family that had come to SWCM for aid. In his twenties he had a job selling encyclopedias door-to-door, but quit the first week because he kept giving his money to those who told him why they couldn't afford to buy. His house was open to anyone who needed a place to stay, whether it be for weeks, months, or years. Nearly 30 people, including a family of eight, have shared his family's home.

He loved to golf, cheer on UofL, read heady books on theology and philosophy, ask deep, troubling questions at the most inconvenient times, and eat sweets, most notably Kit Kat bars. He dearly loved his family. Those who remain to celebrate him include sister Jo Ann Fleming; son John and wife Teresa; daughter Susan; grandchildren Jessie Cook (Jeremy), Erin Lum (Kevin), and Connor; baby boy Lum who is expected in August; nieces and nephews; and children of the heart.

In memory of his life well lived, please make a gift in his name to Southwest Community Ministries, 8504 Terry Road, Louisville, Ky., 40258. And enjoy a Kit Kat bar.

Tribute Wall



“ Owen Funeral Homes created a Tribute Video in memory of John Terry Smith



Owen Funeral Homes - April 24, 2020 at 01:56 PM



“ I remember Mr Smith both from being my history teacher my junior year and as my tennis coach at Valley High my senior year. Last time I saw and spoke to him was at our 50th Class Reunion where he was gracious even if he didn't remember me. Wonderfully nice teacher, and had great patience when it came to (trying to) coach me in tennis. May he rest in peace.

Thomas Murray
Valley HS Class of '68

Thomas R Murray - April 26, 2020 at 11:38 AM