



John D Jolly

June 2, 1937 - November 21, 2023

Retired Circuit Judge John D. Jolly, age 86, of Russellville, passed away on Tuesday, November 21, 2023 at his residence.

John meant many things to many people but will always be admired most for his faith in God, his heart for others, and his extraordinary discipline throughout life's trials.

If there is anything John would want remembered about him, it's that he loved God with all his heart, soul, and mind. John was always a churchgoer but after a Lay Witness Mission in the early 1970s, he became a born-again Christian with a fire to spread the gospel. He decided to do this specifically through mission work. With two strong Christian friends (Ralph Bone and Horace Sanders) he founded Laymen Unlimited, a non-denominational organization to introduce lay persons to foreign missions through short-term work projects overseas. They ministered in countries throughout the Caribbean, and Central and South America in the 1970s and 1980s.

In addition to his overseas ministry, John was an active member and church elder, for many years in the First Presbyterian Church in Russellville and later in the First Presbyterian Church in Tuscumbia. He developed many lifelong friendships through these two church homes.

John was born and raised in Gadsden, Alabama. After watching his parents struggle, he realized at an early age that the key to unlock doors to one's future was a good education. He became the first in his family to finish high

school and college, and then later graduated from law school at the University of Alabama. He came to Russellville in 1967 and served as district attorney for Franklin County from 1967-1983 and as Franklin County's Circuit Judge from 1983-2001. About his career, John often joked that he "served 33 1/3 years with no time off for good behavior."

The opportunities that getting an education afforded him made John a strong advocate for others to do likewise. In 2000, John founded There's a Way, a non-profit foundation that awarded merit and need-based scholarships to high school seniors in Franklin County. This foundation was John's passion project throughout his retirement years until 2018.

In the 1980s, as an outlet for the stressors of life, John discovered jogging. Eventually this turned into a passion for long-distance running, which became a defining part of his life. He ran his first marathon at the age of 55 and developed a discipline of running about three marathons a year. Before he hung up his running shoes at the age of 67, John ran 32 marathons in places as far-flung as Death Valley, California and as prestigious as the Boston Marathon.

John received numerous honors for his public service but the act of giving meant more to him than any award he ever received. His inspirational motto was, "Do all the good you can, for all the people you can, for as long as you can!"

John was preceded in death by five days, by his beloved wife, Jeanette H. Jolly, as devoted to him in life as they now are devoted to one another in death. He was also preceded in death by his parents, Joe C. Jolly and Ara M. (Walker) Jolly; brother, James Vernon Jolly; mother-in-law, Lena (Hamilton) Hester; and father-in-law, W.M. Hester.

He leaves to cherish his memory, daughter, Ginger E. Jolly; niece, Leann Kennedy; great-nephew, Josh White; and other extended family and friends. The visitation for both John and Jeanette will be 12-2 p.m. Sunday, November 26, 2023, at Spry Memorial Chapel. The funerals will follow at 2:00 p.m. at Spry Memorial Chapel. Dr. Randy Thompson will officiate. The burials will be

at Franklin Memory Gardens.

The family would like to extend a heartfelt thanks to Rick Suddith, Joe Fine, David Scruggs, Danny McDowell, Becky Hester, Kay Drummond, Ann Mills, Gayle Davis, Faye Baker, and Amy Davis for their faithful friendship and devotion throughout the years. The family would also like to thank Dr. Sally H. Houston for her medical guidance, along with Greta Boutwell, Tiona Estavan, Bonnie Dean, Jenny Skipworth, Lorie Knight, Jessica McCray and other staff at Hospice of North Alabama for their commitment and care.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to your charity of choice.

Spry Memorial Chapel assisted the family. To have us sign the book for you, please free to call or to leave private condolences, please visit our website at www.sprymemorialchapel.com.

Tribute Wall

JP

“ *Ginger, I loved your mom and dad. They left a loving influence on us. Our prayers are for you and the days to come.*

Jan and Lee Page - November 22, 2023 at 12:00 AM

SH

“ *Sorry to hear this ,he was a good man ,*



Sam Heath - November 22, 2023 at 12:00 AM

BB

“ *Ginger,
I am so sorry. ♦Praying for comfort and peace.
Betty*

Betty Bedford - November 22, 2023 at 12:00 AM