



James Leslie Smith

November 24, 1953 - March 5, 2020

On the mild, sunny Thursday afternoon of March 5, 2020 in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, James Leslie “Jim” Smith peacefully passed away at the age of 66 from pancreatic cancer that he had been fiercely battling for the last 18 months.

Jim was born on November 24, 1953 in Raton, New Mexico to Norman Leslie and Viola Marie Buck Smith. Jim’s father worked for Conoco on the seismograph crew traveling the country for oil exploration. Thus, Jim and his sisters were each born in different states: older sister Joyce in Riverton, Wyoming and younger sister Jo Ann in Houston, Texas. A promotion for their father brought them to Ponca City, Oklahoma in 1957 where he spent his childhood.

Jim and his family spent summers visiting his grandparents John and Margaret Smith, who lived in Williamstown, a small town in northeast Missouri with a population of only 100. His grandma planted large gardens and made him fruit pies, and he would go fishing with his grandpa using crawdads and worms for bait.

Jim graduated from Ponca City Senior High School in 1972. He went on to receive his bachelor’s degree in economics from the University of Oklahoma in 1977. Upon graduation, he worked in finance until he began working for

Conoco in Ponca City on November 16, 1981. Jim started in the Treasury Department and held numerous positions in the company, from payroll accountant to coordinator and supervisor, to advisory positions in expatriate payroll and ending his career as a senior tax payroll advisor. Jim's job transferred to Bartlesville, Oklahoma in November 2002 when Conoco and Phillips 66 merged into ConocoPhillips. Jim later retired from ConocoPhillips on May 1, 2015. His nearly 34 year career with Conoco and ConocoPhillips were blessed with many lifelong friendships and a few that evolved into a bond as strong as family, most notably Tina Staggs.

Jim married Mary Patricia Hercyk of Ponca City on August 21, 1976 at St. Mary's Catholic Church. They settled in Ponca City after graduating from college and built a home on 20 acres of farmland gifted to them by Mary's parents, Stefan and Kateryna Hercyk. Mary's parents were Ukrainian and met in a displaced persons camp in Germany after WWII ended in 1945. They married and had a daughter before immigrating to the United States in August, 1949. Mary was the first child of three to be born in America. Jim affectionately called his inlaws Pop and Mama, and fully embraced the Ukrainian culture of her family. He was especially close to Mama and enjoyed helping her in the kitchen and in her garden. Marrying into a farming family, he took to working wheat harvest, hauling alfalfa, driving trucks and tractors, and helping out wherever he could. Jim always said those 27 years of living in the country were the happiest of his life.

A major part of that happiness was the birth of daughter Catherine Leslie on March 25, 1989. Jim was an actively involved Dad who took to fatherhood naturally. He spent hundreds of hours reading to Catherine, who to this day is an avid reader. He helped coach her in soccer as a child and the two of them became certified soccer referees and would spend weekends together at the soccer fields reffing games. Jim was very proud of Catherine's accomplishments as a student and in the arts. But, more than anything, he

was proud of the loving, caring person she is. From day one of his cancer diagnosis, she was with him every step of the way from doctor appointments to treatments to seeking out the country's best doctors for his care in Chicago, Durham, Salt Lake City, and Atlanta. And Jim was equally proud of his son-in-law, Dr. Joshua Lerner. Jim witnessed Josh's transformation from a graduate student earning his Ph.D. to becoming a professor of political science at Duke University. Josh was there supporting Catherine every step of the way on this cancer journey.

Jim enjoyed cooking elaborate breakfasts on weekends and hosting family barbecues on the farm. He was also an avid reader, liked football and soccer, traveling, gardening, and after retiring collecting fossils, rocks and minerals. Jim also loved his Boston terrier, Bogart, who was affectionately referred to as his second child. They were inseparable and would go on walks daily. They were well known fixtures around the Park Hill neighborhood and Sooner Park.

This experience with cancer reaffirmed the goodness in the world when the Park Hill neighborhood rallied around in support of Jim moving to Chicago for six months for his initial treatment. In his final weeks of life, he was fortunate to have been able to spend it in Atlanta with his sister Joyce, nieces Marisa and Heddy and her husband Kevin. Catherine, Josh, Mary, and of course Bogart were also there. This last trip was possible with the aid of Jimmy Shook, a friend of over 50 years who considered each other to be brothers.

Jim was preceded in death by his father-in-law Stefan Hercyk on December 11, 1996, his father Norman Smith on June 8, 2003, his mother Viola Jones on May 15, 2005, his step mother Eleanor Smith on June 25, 2009, and his mother-in-law, Mama, Kateryna Hercyk on January 10, 2010.

Jim is survived by his wife Mary of 43 years, daughter Catherine Smith and

son-in-law Dr. Joshua Lerner; sister Joyce Faiz and her daughters Marisa Faiz and Heddy Faiz and husband Kevin McKinney. Stepfather Jack Jones, stepbrother Paul Childs and his wife Berit Schumann, stepsisters Jamie Childs and her husband Cliff Shilling and Leslie Childs and her husband Peter Collora, and their families. Also, sister-in-law Anna Henley and husband Steve, brother-in-laws John Hercyk and wife Neta, Steve Hercyk and wife Tanya and all their families. Sister Jo Ann Bales and her family. He is also survived by his goddaughter Stefanie Cotton and her husband Marlon and their daughters Riley and Reese. And of course his beloved dog Bogart.

The funeral service will be officiated by Father John O'Neill and be held on Saturday, March 14 2020 at 2:00 p.m. at St John Before The Latin Gate Catholic Church at 715 South Johnstone Avenue in Bartlesville, Oklahoma. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network at pancan.org/donate.

Our lives will never be the same, but we will always remember how caring and devoted he was as a husband and father. The people we lose never leave us; they live on in our hearts and minds forever. We hope that those who knew Jim continue to cherish and share their memories of him.

Previous Events

Memorial Service

MAR 14. 2:00 PM (CT)

St. John Before the Latin Gate
715 S. Johnstone
Bartlesville, OK 74003
<http://www.stjohn-bartlesville.org/>

Tribute Wall



“ *James Leslie Smith*

October 23, 2023 at 04:40 AM



“ *James Leslie Smith*

October 06, 2023 at 03:15 PM



“ *Mary, I will miss seeing and visiting with Jim in the neighborhood. We have always teased of stalking each other since you lived behind me on East St. and after you moving to Park Hill, I moved to Park Hill. Jim was such a sweetheart and I will always cherish my friendship with him. May God give you strength at this time. I am here for you.*

Bj Birmingham - March 16, 2020 at 08:29 AM



“ *Mary and Catherine, my heart is with you at this time of Jim's passing into eternal happiness. The mutual love and devotion you shared will surely be a consolation now and in the days ahead. Wherever you are he will always be there with you. Be assured of my prayers.*

Sally Caughlin

Sally Caughlin - March 13, 2020 at 05:22 PM

JK

“Joyce, Marisa, Heddy and Kevin purchased the Rose Remembrance for the family of James Leslie Smith .



Joyce, Marisa, Heddy and Kevin - March 12, 2020 at 11:53 AM



“Basket Full of Wishes was purchased for the family of James Leslie Smith .



March 11, 2020 at 10:35 PM

NM

“Jim, Mary and Bogie were neighbors of mine in Park Hill for many years before I moved away 5 or 6 years ago. He was the kindest person I have ever met. Such a good man and neighbor. Mary, I am so sorry for your loss.

Nancy Morehouse

Nancy Morehouse - March 11, 2020 at 09:00 PM

PP

*We are so sorry for your loss. Many mornings we would see Jim's truck at Sooner Park tell the girls, Coco and Remi that Bogey and Lucy are here! Big smiles and tails wagging!
Jim was a special and very kind man. Our prayers are with all of you.
Jim, Pam, Coco and Remi.*

Pam Pofahl - March 12, 2020 at 03:28 PM



“ *Small Garden Dish was purchased for the family of James Leslie Smith .*



March 11, 2020 at 04:52 PM



“ *Jim has been a neighbor for about two years now. I'll never forget the "first" time we met after having worked together briefly around the P66 and COP split. We could not figure out how we knew each other, until Jim comes running back to my house after having remembered. For the last two years, I've lived next to someone I want to be like. He would drop anything to help someone in need. We will miss Jim. I will miss his talks during his evening walks, I will miss him teasing about my yard, and we will all miss his humor and advice. Jim was a great man and lived life like you should. We are so sorry for your loss,*

Wes & Kadrian Hurd

Wes Hurd - March 09, 2020 at 04:02 PM



“ *There are not sufficient words I can add that will do justice to the influence Jim had on my life. I find comfort in knowing he is not in pain or distress any longer. Kat, Josh, and Mary, I applaud you. You all stood firm and fought one heck of a fight making sure he considered every option before finding resolve in making the transition.*

*All our love,
Robert & Ben Reeves*

Robert Reeves - March 09, 2020 at 01:39 PM

NH

“ Nancy Heck purchased the Lovely One Spathiphyllum Plant for the family of James Leslie Smith .



Nancy Heck - March 09, 2020 at 11:53 AM

KW

“ I met Jim working at ConocoPhillips and I immediately liked him because he had a humor I grew up with in my family. He was smart and did his job well. But my favorite thing which I will never forget is the extraordinary relationship he had with his Boston Terrier, Bogart. The dog was truly a kindred spirit who loved his master with a devotion seldom seen and that love was returned all the more. People often wonder if dogs go to heaven. I was told everything we need to be happy will be there. Jim will see Mary again and Bogart.

Kaylene Westbrook - March 09, 2020 at 11:41 AM



“ Basket Full of Wishes was purchased for the family of James Leslie Smith .



March 09, 2020 at 10:45 AM

JP

“ Jim was one of the kindest and smartest people I have ever worked with! I am so very sorry for your loss. He was such a special and dear friend to many.

Julie Pugh - March 07, 2020 at 05:23 PM

SM

“ *Mary, Cathryn, Josh, Bogart and Lucy:*

We are so deeply sorry for your loss. Jim was a great loyal friend and co-worker. Jim was so proud of you all. He called himself the lucky one to have Mary and Cat. I think we were all the lucky ones to have Jim In our lives. We will miss him terribly. Praying for you all.

Sandra McClintock - March 07, 2020 at 04:01 PM