



Mr. James Cephas Stokes Jr.

January 16, 1930 - December 22, 2019

James Cephas Stokes, Jr. passed away on Sunday, December 22, 2019, at the Cottingham House in Seneca, SC, at the age of 89. He spent his final weeks surrounded by his loving wife and children, who rarely left his side. He was born on January 16, 1930, to James C. and Miriam D. Stokes in Lynchburg, SC.

Jim led an amazing life filled with multiple accomplishments. He started life as the son of a poor tobacco sharecropper, but became a pilot, a Marine who was a Veteran of WWII, attended the Citadel where he graduated with distinguished honors in Physics in 1959 (Including inductions into The Round Table, Sigma Pi Sigma and the Citadel Honorary Society), and was recruited straight out of college by a then new government organization, less than a year old, called NASA. He was an instrumental part of the Mercury, Gemini, Apollo, Skylab, and Space Shuttle Programs in Mission Control. He began his career before Mission Control was even built in Houston and started his career at Goddard Flight Center in Maryland where he helped build the World Wide Tracking Network and Computing System for Project Mercury. At the height of the Apollo program he was responsible for overseeing all hardware and software development in the Mission Control Center in Houston, Texas as Division Chief of the Ground Data Systems Division. Upon his retirement in 1984, he continued to work as a contractor for NASA through his own consulting firm. He received numerous awards during his career, including the

NASA Exceptional Service Medal for his work during the Apollo Program.

Jim was a devout Baptist who taught Sunday School for many years. He was a spiritual man of integrity who possessed excellent leadership abilities according to those who worked under him at NASA and afterwards. Though he could be considered by some to be a soft spoken man, there are many who also remember his wonderful laugh and great kindness towards others, with no regard to race or creed. He found great joy in his gardens, where he seemed able to grow anything that could be planted.

Jim is survived by his beloved wife, Sara Anderson Turner Stokes, his 4 children, Sally Louise Jenkins (James), Lisa Ann Stevens Jessop (Alma), Lieutenant James Elwin Stokes (Meloney), and Kelly Stokes Sollinger. Jim is also survived by his sister, Betty Stokes Cottingham (J.D.), whom he always looked out for from their childhood until the very end. Jim has 11 grandchildren and 16 great grand children who have all felt his loss deeply. He is also survived by his beloved rescue cat, Apollo, who misses him dearly.

Our family would like to extend our heartfelt love and gratitude to the angels of The Cottingham House in Seneca, SC, part of the Hospice of the Foothills network, for the love and support that they showed to our family during our darkest hours. Please know that you are greatly appreciated by many.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks that donations please be made to The Cottingham House (Hospice of the Foothills) and to the Clemson Animal Hospital Tom Cat Fund, 108 Liberty Dr., Clemson, SC, 29631.

The following is a tribute written by Jim's oldest grandson, Jackson Tate Nichols of Sheridan, WY, and the words therein are shared by all of the family: We lost an incredible member of our family last Sunday. I had the great privilege of having many conversations and interviews with him later in his life. What do you say about a man who lived in a Boarding House in Lynchburg,

SC, as a small child, where he remembered an old, long white bearded Confederate Veteran who had a room down the hall? What do you say about a kid who at one time was a poor tobacco sharecropper's son who built radios in his little room at night? What do you say about someone who, before he was even able to get his driver's license, had a pilot's license and got into trouble on his first solo flight for buzzing too low over his girlfriend's house to try and impress her in his family's plane? A young man who built an 18' cabin cruiser, and took it from Lynchburg to Charleston via various waterways, and raced a hydroplane boat he built in the waters around Charleston? What do you say about a young man who joined the Marines at age 16, unbeknownst to them at the time, to be a part of what would later be known as WWII? What do you say about a man who graduated from the Citadel with Honors in Physics and who was recruited straight out of college by a new government organization, still in its first year, named NASA? What do you say about a man who had good sense enough to ask my grandmother to marry him? What can I say about a man who was doing the job of a computer in 1959, who, at one point, was head of Worldwide Communications in Mission Control in Houston during the Apollo Program, was tasked with performing the calculations, by hand, for Apollo 14's trajectory to the Moon (or Moon Shot as he always said), was instrumental in the first Space Station, and who received numerous awards and mementos from NASA, including the NASA Exceptional Service Medal for his work during the Apollo Program? A man who was head of software development for the Mercury, Gemini, Apollo, Skylab, and Space Shuttle Programs? What do you say about a man who carpooled, via an old surplus DC-3 from the war, to meetings in Washington with John Glenn and others who were so instrumental to the success of the United States Space Program? What do you say about someone who was tough enough to be a Marine and served his country for his entire working life through the Space Program, but who also found tender joy in gardening and his dear rescue cat, Apollo? What do you say about a man who, in the end, was most proud of his

family in regards to accomplishments? To those who ever had email correspondence with him, you know that every message he sent ended with the same two quotes at the bottom of the page. One said "This world is not my home, I'm only passing through it." and the other said "Semper Fi!" Grandad, we love and miss you dearly. Besides Thank You, we have 2 things to say: 1) We are glad you have found your home. 2) Semper Fi! You will be greatly missed by us all.

“...I'll see you on the Dark Side of the Moon.”

Tribute Wall



“ *Mr. James Cephas Stokes Jr.*

January 28, 2023 at 01:03 PM



“ *Kathy Addis lit a candle in memory of Mr. James Cephas Stokes Jr.*



Kathy addis - January 04, 2020 at 07:49 PM