



Mr. John Thomas Lay Sr.

December 30, 1938 - July 13, 2019

John Thomas Lay, Sr., 80, who raised a loving family, earned a glowing reputation as a gifted educator, and ran countless miles up and down the roads of Oconee County, died Saturday, July 13, 2019, in Columbia, SC.

Born on December 30, 1938, in Walhalla, SC, John was the son of the late Louis Robert and Lillie Mae Hudson Lay. He graduated from Walhalla High School in 1956. John went on to graduate from Erskine College, where he studied history and met the love of his life, Sandra Ray Lay. They married in 1960, and built a wonderful life together over the course of 43 years until her death.

John made his reputation serving the students of South Carolina, first as a history teacher and state champion football coach in Ware Shoals. After earning a Master's Degree from the University of Alabama, John furthered his work in education that would span the rest of his career. He became a guidance counselor at Greenville Technical College, then Assistant Director of Beaufort Technical College. He was then named Assistant Superintendent and Director of Personnel for the School District of Oconee County. He retired from the school district after more than 40 years of service. In addition, he served his community as a Captain in the Army National Guard, president of Walhalla Rotary Club, member of the Oconee Planning Commission, and deacon and elder at Walhalla Presbyterian Church.

But no role brought him more joy than that of father and grandfather. John lived a life focused on a loving marriage and a strong family. He taught his family the value of hard work, the importance of laughter, and of savoring simple pleasures in life like long runs, clogging, golf, college football, good dogs, spaghetti westerns, and a beautiful mountain view. He lived a good life. He cherished his family and made them feel treasured every single day.

John is survived by his children: John Thomas Lay, Jr. and wife Sharon, Joanna Lay Westbrook and husband Craig, Julie Lay Littleton and husband Mark; and his grandchildren: Sarah Westbrook, Claire Westbrook, Eliza Lay, Abby Littleton, Thomas Lay, Luke Littleton and James Lay.

In addition to his wife and parents, John was preceded in death by a son: John Robert Lay.

Funeral services will be conducted at 2:00 PM, Wednesday, July 17, 2019, at Walhalla Presbyterian Church. Burial will follow at Bethel Presbyterian Church Cemetery in Walhalla.

The family will receive friends from 5:00-7:00 PM, Tuesday, July 16, 2019, at Durham Hall, 230 E. Main Street, Walhalla, SC 29691.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to the Alzheimer's Association – SC Chapter, 4124 Clemson Blvd., Suite L, Anderson, SC 29621. <https://www.alz.org/sc>

We will miss him always, as we try to live each day by his example.

Cemetery Details

Bethel Presbyterian Church Cemetery

580 Bethel Church Road
Walhalla, SC 29691
info@bethelchurchwalhalla.com
<http://bethelchurchwalhalla.com/contact/>

Previous Events

Visitation

JUL 16. 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM (ET)

Durham Hall
230 East Main Street
Walhalla, SC 29691
durhamhallevnts@gmail.com
<http://www.durhamhallevnts.com/>

Funeral Service

JUL 17. 2:00 PM (ET)

Walhalla Presbyterian Church
600 East Main Street
Walhalla, SC 29691
<https://sites.google.com/site/walhallapresbyterianchurch/>

Tribute Wall



“ *Mr. John Thomas Lay Sr.*

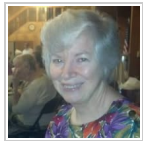
January 28, 2023 at 01:03 PM



“ *Sherry Abbott lit a candle in memory of Mr. John Thomas Lay Sr.*



Sherry Abbott - July 20, 2019 at 06:03 PM



“ *Barbara Wilson lit a candle in memory of Mr. John Thomas Lay Sr.*



Barbara Wilson - July 18, 2019 at 03:31 PM



“ *John, Nana, Julie and family, please accept my condolences on the loss of your father. I lost mine at 18 and am glad you had so many good years. Prayers for you all.*



Patsy Robins Bright

Patsy Bright - July 18, 2019 at 03:06 PM

RT

“ *Reg Tatum lit a candle in memory of Mr. John Thomas Lay Sr.*



Reg Tatum - July 17, 2019 at 08:06 PM

JC

“ *I love the Lay family. I feel that this is the end of our friendship. I want you all to know that I love you and keep all the family in my prayers.*

Joan Chittenden - July 17, 2019 at 07:52 PM

WR

“ *Wanda Rutledge lit a candle in memory of Mr. John Thomas Lay Sr.*



Wanda Rutledge - July 16, 2019 at 02:31 PM

CK

“ *Carina, Vanessa, Kyra, Isabella, Natalie, and Katarina purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Mr. John Thomas Lay Sr..*



Carina, Vanessa, Kyra, Isabella, Natalie, and Katarina - July 16, 2019 at 02:28 PM

KU

“ Kinetic Credit Union purchased the Lavender Reflections Spray for the family of Mr. John Thomas Lay Sr..



Kinetic Credit Union - July 16, 2019 at 02:27 PM

JP

“ James And Maxine Pettit lit a candle in memory of Mr. John Thomas Lay Sr.



James and Maxine Pettit - July 16, 2019 at 02:24 PM



“ Florist Choice Bouquet was purchased for the family of Mr. John Thomas Lay Sr..



July 16, 2019 at 01:03 PM

RS

“ Ray Smith lit a candle in memory of Mr. John Thomas Lay Sr.



Ray Smith - July 16, 2019 at 12:53 PM

JA

“ John T, Nana, Julie and families just wanted to say that your father was a good man and will be missed. He always had a friendly smile and a good word whenever our paths crossed. He always talked about his family with great pride. Our thoughts and prayers are with your family during this difficult time.

Randy Abbott Jr.

Julian Abbott - July 16, 2019 at 12:51 PM

HH

“ Cousin John will be long-remembered for his outstanding leadership in many places. I cherish the limited time we had together.

*Gene Hudson
Myrtle Beach, SC*

H. Eugene Hudson - July 16, 2019 at 11:51 AM

SH

“ *John T, Nanna, and Julie:
I can't think of John and Sandra without smiling! They both touched so many lives and loved each other and their family.
I also laugh aloud. We had some good times.
Actually, I am giggling now as I glance back through the years.
I send love and hugs. Stuart*

Stuart Heath - July 16, 2019 at 08:51 AM

DA

“ Don Albertson sent a virtual gift in memory of Mr. John Thomas Lay Sr.



Don Albertson - July 16, 2019 at 06:26 AM

JJ

“ Juanita Burrell Johns lit a candle in memory of Mr. John Thomas Lay Sr.



Juanita Burrell Johns - July 16, 2019 at 02:54 AM

TA

“ IN LOVING MEMORY! JOHN & MY DAD
YUKON ALEXANDER WAS FIRST
COUSINS! THE FAMILY IN OUR PRAYERS!
TERRAL & JULIE ALEXANDER



TERRAL & JULIE ALEXANDER - July 15, 2019 at 10:00 PM

MO

“ Mark J Osborne lit a candle in memory of Mr. John Thomas Lay Sr.



Mark J Osborne - July 15, 2019 at 08:45 PM

JH

“ *Judy Hines lit a candle in memory of Mr. John Thomas Lay Sr.*



Judy Hines - July 15, 2019 at 06:58 PM

KA

“ *Kathy Addis lit a candle in memory of Mr. John Thomas Lay Sr.*



Kathy addis - July 15, 2019 at 06:38 PM

JB

“ *John, was one of my classmates for many years. He was a fine person, a fine athlete and a good friend. He will be missed. John Butler*



John Butler - July 15, 2019 at 04:30 PM

BD

“ *Bobbie Duncan lit a candle in memory of Mr. John Thomas Lay Sr.*



Bobbie Duncan - July 15, 2019 at 03:39 PM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Mr. John Thomas Lay Sr..*



July 15, 2019 at 12:06 PM



“ *Such a loss of a good, good man. John was a fixture in education when I started my career in Oconee. My deepest sympathy extended and prayers lifted.*

Janet Smalley - July 15, 2019 at 10:13 AM



“ *Jess&Marcella Langston lit a candle in memory of Mr. John Thomas Lay Sr.*



Jess&Marcella Langston - July 15, 2019 at 09:48 AM

BS

“ John Lay helped me so much. I was a student at Ware Shoals High School when he was there. I vividly remember taking a career aptitude test in high school It showed a strong interest in plants and forestry. This led me to get a master's degree in horticulture. Later when I was teaching horticulture at Walhalla High School, I had to leave during the middle of the year due to my son's life threatening illness. John was in the district office and greatly aided me in being able to keep insurance for Paul. He was so compassionate and supportive, and for that, I will always be eternally grateful. My heartfelt sympathy to the family on the loss of an incredible man.
Barbara Holloway Smith
Pendleton, SC

Barbara Holloway Smith - July 15, 2019 at 09:08 AM

BL

“ Burgess (Bird) Laye lit a candle in memory of Mr. John Thomas Lay Sr.



Burgess (Bird) Laye - July 15, 2019 at 09:01 AM

SM

“ Sherry Rogers Moore
Pine Street Elementary / James M.Brown
Elementary



Sherry Moore - July 15, 2019 at 06:47 AM

RA

“ *Richard Addis lit a candle in memory of Mr. John Thomas Lay Sr.*



Richard Addis - July 15, 2019 at 06:39 AM

LK

“ *Lynn Kennemore sent a virtual gift in memory of Mr. John Thomas Lay Sr.*



Lynn Kennemore - July 14, 2019 at 11:57 PM

JA

“ *It is with sadness that we learn of the death of Coach. He will always be remembered as one of the greatest coaches at Ware Shoals High. He was kind and considerate to the players and he was very much respected. Judy and George Abrams*



Judy Abrams - July 14, 2019 at 08:32 PM

LT

“ *Louise & Clarence Towe lit a candle in memory of Mr. John Thomas Lay Sr.*



Louise & Clarence Towe - July 14, 2019 at 08:15 PM

LT

“ John T, Nana, Julie and families, we are so very sorry to learn of John's passing. He was and always will be one of our favorite people in the world along with your mother. Many good times especially meals were enjoyed with them. John and Sandra were inspirations to all of us in the education field and to many others. We will always remember when the family moved back to Oconee and the feelings we had of having another "home boy" back working with our Oconee Students. The great stories he entertained us with still bring chuckles to us especially the one about the two of them trying to unclog the septic tank. Please never forget what your family means to us. We want you to know that John's obituary fits him to a T; you did a wonderful job getting just the right words to describe the man who was loved so deeply. We miss your mom and have missed your dad ever since he moved from the delightful home in Mt. Rest. Best wishes, take care of each other, and always know "you have many friends who love you in Walhalla".

Clarence & Louise L Towe

Louise Towe - July 14, 2019 at 08:14 PM

BD

“ So sorry to hear of Coach Lay's passing. I was a student of both he and Sandra in Ware Shoals and remember them as favorite teachers who were beloved by all. . My thoughts and prayers are with with all the family.

Betty Higgins Derrick - July 14, 2019 at 06:58 PM

DN

“ *Doug And Linda Reese Nix lit a candle in memory of Mr. John Thomas Lay Sr.*



Doug and Linda Reese Nix - July 14, 2019 at 06:28 PM

ID

“ *Dink & Iris Duncan lit a candle for Mr. John Thomas Lay Sr.*



iris duncan - July 14, 2019 at 05:48 PM

BJ

“ *Becky Johnson lit a candle in memory of Mr. John Thomas Lay Sr.*



Becky Johnson - July 14, 2019 at 05:22 PM

RB

“ *John was a beloved friend and co-worker in SDOC and our church. He loved Sandra and their children so very much. And he had a wicked sense of humor that I have always treasured!*



John T. Nana, and Julie, you will stay in my prayers. You are blessed by knowing how much your parents loved you.

Rosemary Bailes - July 14, 2019 at 04:39 PM