



Francis Jay Roberts

October 7, 1942 - May 4, 2020

Francis “Jay” Roberts of Frankfort, KY passed away on May 4, 2020. He is survived by the two great loves of his life, wife Rhonda L. Sims and sister Anne Roberts Packer (Raleigh, NC). He is also survived by two nieces Kathy Packer (Sussex, England) and Lindsay Packer (New York City), two great-nieces Emma Gross (Chicago) and Mira Gross (Seattle), mother-in-law Roma Jean Sims (Frankfort), many friends, and beloved former students that he considered his “1,000 kids”.

He was born in Erlanger, KY on October 7, 1942 to Francis W. Roberts and Virginia Fischer Roberts. Most of his childhood was spent in Richmond, KY where his sister was always his biggest supporter in a home filled with music and reading, so much so that he said even the dog read. As a teen, he worked with his pharmacist father at Richmond’s Begley Drugstore where he developed a strong work ethic and skills to support and serve others.

At Model Laboratory School, Jay excelled in academics, debate, and played football for Madison-Model. He continued to debate at the college level at the University of Kentucky and Eastern Kentucky University. While at ECU, he also was yearbook editor and justice on the student court. After graduating from ECU, he attended graduate school and taught English at the University of California at Davis. Returning to Kentucky after his father’s death, Jay taught English at ECU for several years, until he joined the middle school staff at Sayre School in Lexington. Jay believed at Sayre he truly learned to teach students and not just content through his collaboration with Don Hollingsworth

and Earl Oremus. Also, during his five years at Sayre, he became an avid vegetable gardener and provider of produce to his school colleagues.

Jay returned to Model Laboratory School for his last classroom position in English and social studies and to coach track and academic teams. A brilliant scholar, Jay was a passionate educator and coach. He loved his students and challenged them to believe in their potential and to think and analyze for themselves. He had high expectations, but his wit and humor made everything seem achievable. Many students still remember with a smile the quote “Do I dare to eat a peach?” from the poem *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* by T.S. Eliot that Jay taught.

In retirement, Jay was a frequent user of Facebook to connect with friends and students. He had strongly held political views and relished a good debate regarding them. He enjoyed good food, fine wine, and stimulating conversation. He was a man with an immense presence and kind heart for others. He loved passionately and was loved so in return.

Tribute Wall

PT

“ Dear Cousin Rhonda, I'm saddened by the loss of your precious soulmate. We were blessed to have him in our family! We sure enjoyed our last dinner with him & all the other times spent together. He was a special man. Our thoughts & prayers are with you & the rest of the family during this time! We love you!!

Peggy Thompson - May 09, 2020 at 05:59 PM

AC

“ I am proud and honored to be one of Mr. Roberts' "1,000 kids", a wonderful brother-and-sisterhood of people. While I was a very shy student at Model Lab School in the 1980s, he encouraged and challenged me to think on my own, to stand up for myself. And, oh, the writers he introduced to me! Faulkner, Vonnegut, Hemingway - such gifts! I am forever grateful for his support, patience, and kindness in the classroom, which has influenced me to this day. I wish to send much love to his wife, Rhonda, and the rest of his family. Please know that Jay is extremely loved and missed by so many.

Anna Campbell - May 08, 2020 at 04:26 PM

FS

“ Rhonda, my thoughts are with you and the many others who loved Jay. I enjoyed working with him back in the KDE days and always looked forward to hearing his perspective on things. His humor saved many a day. I can't think of him without also thinking of polar bears!

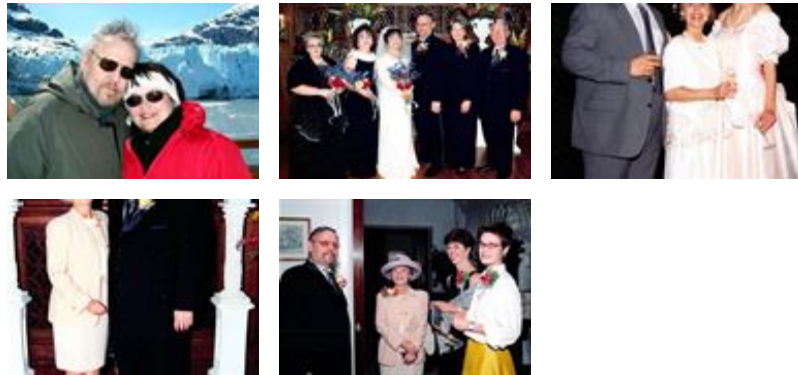
Sincere condolences to all. Jay will be missed.

Fran Salyers

Fran Salyers - May 08, 2020 at 02:54 PM



“ 45 files added to the album *Life Tributes*



Lecompte Johnson Taylor Funeral Home - May 08, 2020 at 11:49 AM



“ 0 file added to the tribute wall

Lecompte Johnson Taylor Funeral Home - May 08, 2020 at 09:40 AM



“ *My thoughts and prayers for all of your family today and in the days ahead.*

Vicki Fosbender - May 08, 2020 at 08:41 AM



“ *Rhonda, I am so sad to hear of Jay's passing. He was certainly a great friend to me and a generous supporter as he got me involved in the KY Geographic Alliance. It was my great pleasure to see both of you frequently on the 18th floor of the tower. My sympathy to Jay's sister and the rest of the family. I will always appreciate how kind he was to me and how helpful he was to my professional development.*

Marcia Lile - May 07, 2020 at 06:16 PM

RM

“ I'm so sorry to hear of Jay's passing. I've known his wife, Rhonda, for years and worked with Jay at the Kentucky Department of Education. I can still remember his retirement party with the Hawaiian theme. Jay was one of the happiest people I've known. He will be missed, but the world is a better place with his being here.

Rae McEntyre

Rae McEntyre - May 07, 2020 at 04:00 PM

S(

“ Sorry to read in our Louisville, Ky paper of the passing of Jay Roberts. We had not ever kept in touch, but I remember when we worked on the EKU yearbook together. I volunteered on the yearbook staff from Fall of 1962 to Spring of 1966.

Sandy Tudor (Walker) Class of 1966.

Sandy Tudor (Walker) - May 07, 2020 at 03:16 PM

DE

“ I didn't know Mr. Roberts, but reading his obituary today in the Louisville paper, I send my condolences to his family, friends, and former students who had the honor and pleasure of being in his presence as close family members or one of his "1,000 kids". I am a retired English teacher of 40 years, enjoying memories of my middle school students, and I understand Mr. Roberts' love of teaching and the young people whose lives he encouraged. Few people touch more lives than a teacher. He will truly be missed and remembered with love by those who knew him. I am honored that such a man chose teaching as his career and life's passion. I would have loved the opportunity to co-teach with such a caring, creative soul.

Blessings to Mr. Roberts and to all who loved him. Denise Ellars, Lanesville, Indiana 47136

Denise Ellars - May 07, 2020 at 01:15 PM

JB

“ Coach Jay Roberts. What a gentle, brilliant, compassionate person you were. To have become reacquainted with you in later years was a gift. You will be sorely missed, but the imprint of your influence on your students, your friends, your co-workers, your family is huge. You live on in our memories, and I hope one day, to see you again and share some great conversations. With love, fond memories, and a tear in my eye,

John W. Brown, Sayre Class of 75.

John W. Brown - May 07, 2020 at 12:07 PM

HB

“ Hope Beatty lit a candle in memory of Francis Jay Roberts



Hope Beatty - May 07, 2020 at 09:19 AM

HB

Praying for Jay's family during this difficult loss.

Hope Beatty - May 07, 2020 at 09:24 AM

OM

“ I love seeing Jay's picture sitting at his favorite table- table 34 at Holly Hill Inn. It was truly a pleasure and an honor to cook for him-a chef's dream. I am so sad that I won't see him at my table again, but I know he's at a banquet beyond compare, drinking the very best wine and toasting us all in the great beyond. It's time for me to go into the kitchen this morning, and as I cook today, I'll think of you my friend, and send my prayers for peace to Rhonda and your family. Thank you for the gift of conviviality and for understanding my mission so intuitively and for enjoying every moment. Food is Love- Ouita

Ouita Michel - May 07, 2020 at 09:18 AM

SB

“ You were a gentle giant, a teacher who truly cared. You gave me a voice and the confidence to have one. I learned so much from you.

Shannan Begley - May 07, 2020 at 08:51 AM

LA

“ Lee Anne Ater lit a candle in memory of Francis Jay Roberts



Lee Anne Ater - May 07, 2020 at 08:09 AM

PP

“ Pam Powers lit a candle in memory of Francis Jay Roberts



Pam Powers - May 06, 2020 at 09:43 PM

SP

“ Oh my! How I am saddened by Jay’s death! He was such a helper to me as I was learning the in’s and out’s of Assessment and Accountability! He believed in me and even stood up for me! He wasn’t even bothered when I called him a couple of times after work hours so he could give me some solid advice. I will always love Jay and Rhonda. Such special people! Bless you Rhonda . I’ll be praying for you and your family ! Love you. Shauna Patton

Shauna Patton - May 06, 2020 at 09:17 PM

JM

“ Rhonda, I am so sad for you, for your family and for all of us, you’re 1,000’s if kids and we are. I wish we could gather and I hope we can in the not so distant future. Jay was a teacher that completely impacted my life. I think he knew I had dyslexia but he pushed me and he used that amazing dry humor to get to me. I cannot express in words the love I have for you both. There was only one Mr. Roberts in life and I’m glad I got to know him, I love you Rhonda and I am forever grateful for having so many great moments with you both. He will surely be missed. Praying for you. ❤️❤️

Jessica Perry Mckinnon - May 06, 2020 at 08:16 PM

MA

“ Marands lit a candle in memory of Francis Jay Roberts



Marands - May 06, 2020 at 04:44 PM