



## James Edward "Ed" Henson

June 23, 1948 - November 3, 2025

Celebration of Life services for Ed Henson will be held Thursday, November 13, at 6 p.m. A gathering of friends and family will begin at 4 p.m. prior to the service.

Ed Henson was born in Winchester, Kentucky on June 23, 1948. He passed away peacefully on November 3, 2025, at Frankfort Regional Medical Center. He is survived by his wife, BeLinda Lewis Henson; his daughter, Sarah Whitney Henson; and his brother, Dean M. (Deborah Hicks) Henson of Sellersburg, IN. He was preceded in death by his daughter, Mary Allison Henson (1983-2015).

Ed and BeLinda were married on April 14, 1974, at Lake Cumberland State Resort Park. They moved to Frankfort in 1976 where Ed became the State Naturalist for Kentucky State Parks. He was promoted to Division Director of State Parks and held the position until his retirement. Ed and BeLinda lived on a farm in northern Frankfort (Bald Knob).

Ed Henson has been associated with Kentucky State Parks since he was a young boy growing up in the Red River Gorge area of Kentucky. His love of nature and culture led him to a degree in Anthropology from Eastern Kentucky University in 1971. During his studies and after extensive research, he co-authored a section in the Archaeological Investigations of the Deep Shelter,

Cave Run Reservoir, Rowan County, Kentucky about developing identification methods of certain chert types associated with various limestone formations. This groundbreaking report established a network studying chert stone tools and their raw material sources. Beginning his career as a bus boy in the lodge dining room at Natural Bridge State Resort Park while still in high school, Ed went on to become a full time employee working as a Recreation Programmer, Naturalist, State Naturalist, Assistant Director, and finally Director of Recreation Parks and Historic Sites until his retirement in 2003 after more than thirty years of service.

During his years of service, Ed directed the operation of 29 state parks and historic sites, including some of the Commonwealth's most treasured historic places and museums. Additionally, his contributions included adding and expanding hiking trails in many state parks, developing an accurate artifact inventory for the thousands of artifacts on display at state park museums, developing and distributing a naturalist newsletter publication, editor and principal writer for a full color Kentucky Parks magazine (1985-86).

Contributions to preservation and conservation of the natural environment throughout all state parks was always a top priority for Ed. To this end, he developed a natural resource inventory system, produced and conducted educational programs, and was instrumental in the establishment of Kentucky Nature Preserves on several parks.

Ed was deeply involved in many projects including renovations, upgrades, and improvements to park museums and historic sites which included the reopening of a working water mill, various monument restorations, museum exhibit improvements, and the acquisition, initial development and staffing of three totally new parks.

An avid photographer, Ed literally added hundreds of photographs to the parks

collection and always kept a camera with him on his visits to the parks. Ed is one of the few, remaining former park employees to have met, talked and hiked with Willard Rouse Jillson, the “father” and first director of Kentucky State Parks.

Now retired, Ed continues his love of the natural and cultural wonders of our state by writing his first historical novel, *Swift*, based on both history and legend that have been passed to us from our pioneer ancestors.

# Previous Events

## Gathering of Family and Friends

NOV 13. 4:00 PM - 6:00 PM (ET)

LeCompte-Johnson-Taylor Funeral Home  
1725 Louisville Rd.  
Frankfort, KY 40601  
(502) 223-5858  
ljtfuneralhome@gmail.com  
<https://ljtfuneralhome.com/>

## Celebration of Life

NOV 13. 6:00 PM (ET)

LeCompte-Johnson-Taylor Funeral Home  
1725 Louisville Rd.  
Frankfort, KY 40601  
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# Tribute Wall

AT

“ Ashley T. planted a grove of 3 [Memorial Trees](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of James Edward "Ed" Henson.

Ashley T. - November 17, 2025 at 07:14 PM



“ Country Basket Blooms was purchased for the family of James Edward "Ed" Henson.



November 13, 2025 at 11:02 AM

FF

“ From the Rose and Cox families planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of James Edward "Ed" Henson.

From the Rose and Cox families - November 13, 2025 at 11:02 AM

JM

“ Jerad and Andrelisa Miller purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of James Edward "Ed" Henson.



Jerad and Andrelisa Miller - November 12, 2025 at 03:53 PM

BM

“ I’ve lost my best friend through high school and college. Many good times often we were having too much fun. Someone said you are a product of people you knew and that could not be more true of our friendship. We enjoyed lunches right up to the end and I will miss my best buddy.

*Robert McQueen*

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**bob mcqueen** - November 12, 2025 at 08:14 AM

BM

“ Bob and Janie McQueen planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of James Edward "Ed" Henson.

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**Bob and Janie McQueen** - November 11, 2025 at 03:39 PM



“ Enchanted Cottage was purchased for the family of James Edward "Ed" Henson.



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November 11, 2025 at 03:39 PM

JU

“ Dear BeLinda and Sarah, I hold you in my heart with prayers for your peace, comfort and strength. Ed was a beacon of knowledge, integrity and humor thru all the years I was honored to work with him. He carried that torch throughout his life and his curiosity in nature inspired countless others, including myself, to care and protect. His flame was too bright to diminish after life; he will inspire and guide for generations to come. Friends share your grief and I hope that you know that you are surrounded by love and support.  
Jean E Unglaub

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**Jean E Unglaub** - November 10, 2025 at 07:40 PM