



W.J. Michael Cody

MAR 13, 1936 - SEP 15, 2024



Scan to Visit



MEMORIAL PARK
Funeral Home & Cemetery

Table of Contents

Obituary	Page 3
Tribute Wall	Page 5



W.J. Michael Cody

MAR 13, 1936 - SEP 15, 2024

Memphis lawyer Mike Cody, 88, died September 15 after a long and courageous battle with Parkinson's disease.

Mike graduated from East High School in 1954, Southwestern (now Rhodes College) in 1958, and the University of Virginia Law School in 1961. When he completed his law degree, he was recruited by a prestigious Philadelphia firm, but Lucius Burch, of the venerable Memphis firm Burch, Porter & Johnson, convinced him to return to his hometown, a city where he could make a significant difference.

Mike made that difference in a vital six-decade career in law, government and politics. He joined Burch, Porter & Johnson in 1961 and was part of a legal team that represented Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. during the civil rights leader's fateful final hours supporting striking Memphis sanitation workers. Soon after King's assassination, Mike and Lucius Burch started Memphis Area Legal Services to give assistance to people unable to afford a lawyer.

Mike was elected to the Memphis City Council in 1975 and served on the council two years before President Jimmy Carter appointed him U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Tennessee, a post he held until 1981. He was Attorney General of Tennessee from 1984 to 1988, arguing four cases before the U.S. Supreme Court during those years.

The dedicated public servant and civil rights champion was equally well-known in his city by his passion for running. He began running in high school, long before it was popular. While running with others, he often talked about history, philosophy and the many books he had read. He logged more than 80,000 miles, running well into his 80s, and while he competed in numerous races and marathons, a love of nature drew him to running paths and other outdoor pursuits. As an avid surfer, he took numerous trips to Hawaii. On diving trips to Yucatan, Mexico, he and Lucius Burch discovered sunken treasure. He rowed on the Mississippi River in his racing shell and hiked in the Colorado mountains over many summers with family and friends.



Obituary

W.J. Michael Cody

MAR 13, 1936 - SEP 15, 2024

He expressed the joy he felt in nature in a 2018 poem he wrote about a morning run in Overton Park: “This morning was the most beautiful of the year in the Old Forest. The fog did not come in ‘on little cat’s feet’ but dramatically as the Grey Owl that lives in those woods.” It closes: “Without your fine camera I took a photo with my old eyes, sent it to my brain and it is now secured in my heart. In 17 years, I will be almost 100, and it is mornings like this that make life so joyous.”

W. J. Michael Cody was predeceased by his parents, Walter James Cody Jr. and Bess Hill Cody. He is survived by his beloved wife of 42 years, Suzanna Marten Cody; his daughters Jane Cody (Scott Simpson) of Corrales, New Mexico, and Mia Cody of Memphis; a son, Michael Cody (Nicole) of Germantown; three grandchildren, Catherine Simpson (Dylan Davis), Walker Simpson and William Simpson; and two great grandchildren. He also leaves a sister, Susan Cody (Jay Corsetti) of Vail, Colorado.

The family is grateful to Mike’s caregivers, Angelica Holmes, Alyscia Jackson and Jonas Parker.

Donations may be made to Church Health or Metropolitan Inter-Faith Association (MIFA).

A celebration of life will be held at a future date.



Tribute Wall

W.J. Michael Cody

MAR 13, 1936 - SEP 15, 2024



Linda Cooper posted:

I came to know Mr. Cody and his son through my work with US Sen. Jim Sasser and Memphis Area Legal Services. He was so kind, helpful and generous to me, as I pursued jobs in the justice community, offering advice and guidance. He was among the best and brightest of Memphis attorneys I have known. His legal acumen outshined only by his commitment and dedication to public service and pursuit of the truth.

April 21 at 3:17 PM



Myeisha Williams posted:

I had the distinct honor of caring for Mr. Mike during his time at Trezvant Manor while in rehab. I saw a piece of mail and determined he had been an attorney. I asked him and he told me that he was the DA for West Tennessee but nothing else. For some reason I went home and looked him up and was astonished to see who he REALLY was. I came back the next day and we talked in length about his start and Martin Luther King, Jr in the days prior to his assassination. Mr. Mike was SO humble and a real sweet man. He was one of my favorite patients before I even knew anything about him. He talked to me about how he LOVED to run and had been doing so all of his life, his children and his wife. Mr. Mike you ran a GREAT race and now you can rest. Thank you for EVERYTHING you did to help others.

December 20 at 7:50 PM



Anthony Richardson posted:

Too many fond memories of Mike- documenting his run for city council, photographing him with Edmund Muskie, talking with him over the years and especially in his last year, by voice then by texts always with photos sent to him and to Jane of his city council run, of life, of shared memories, of shared history...he enriched my life immensely.

May 22 at 8:36 PM



Patricia Moore posted:

Suzie, Mia, Jane, Michael and family sincere condolences. Love you all. Patti, Liam & Aidan Moore

December 11 at 6:51 PM



Tribute Wall

W.J. Michael Cody
MAR 13, 1936 - SEP 15, 2024



Yarniverse Memphis posted:

May his memory be a blessing

September 24 at 10:29 AM



Estelle Hood posted:

Sending much love and special sympathy to Suzie, Jane, Michael, Mia and Mike's whole cherished family , as I moirn the loss of my wonderful good friend Mike Cody. Estelle Hood

September 20 at 1:01 PM



Bill Bruce posted:

Mike Cody was a giant at the Memphis and Tennessee Bars. I am proud to have him as a friend and colleague, and I hereby extend sincere condolences to his widow, family, and many friends. We shall miss you, Mike.

September 18 at 6:07 PM



Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring W.J. by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



Scan to Visit



MEMORIAL PARK
Funeral Home & Cemetery