



William Haskel Smith

September 8, 1924 - July 5, 2017

Haskel was born on September 8, 1924 at home in Laurel to John Wesley and Mary Richard Smith. He was the fifth of eight children. He left school in the 1940s to join the U.S. Navy during World War II. He was inducted in Jackson and sent to San Diego, California for basic training, which was the first time he had been out of the state of Mississippi. After basic training, he was assigned to the U.S.S. Curtiss and was shipped to the South Pacific where he spent three years. He saw action at Guam, Eniwetok, Kwajalein, Tarawa in the Marshall Islands, Tinian in the Mariana Islands, and Okinawa. He was a survivor of a kamikaze attack at Okinawa. He was discharged in December of 1945. He was awarded his high school diploma from George S. Gardiner High School with a number of other men who had left school to enlist after the attack on Pearl Harbor. After his discharge he owned a floor finishing business. He later sold that business and went to work for Thomas Gibbons at the Laurel Leader-Call in June of 1946. He rose from an apprentice to composing room foreman and retired in 1987 after 41 years. Haskel retired on July 3, 1987, which was the day his grandson and greatest joy in life was born. In March of 2003, Haskel was awarded the Unsung Hero Award by the Laurel Leader-Call in recognition of outstanding and unselfish service to his community.

In January of 1946 he met Margie Simpson on a Laurel city bus, and they married on June 22, 1946. In June of 2017 they celebrated their 71st wedding anniversary. In 1946, Haskel joined Kingston United Methodist Church, where

he taught the junior high boys' Sunday school class for many years. He also served as Sunday school superintendent and was on the board of stewards. After his retirement, Haskel served on the Laurel Civil Service Commission for nine years. Haskel was an active member of the American Legion (Post 11), where he held the office of post commander five times as well as holding every other office. He served as State of Mississippi commander in 1986-1987 and held the office of Southern Vice Commander on the national level. He was a member of the national American Legion Magazine Commission in 1987 and 1988, and he was the managing editor of the Legion'Aire, the monthly newspaper of the department of Mississippi of the American Legion for many years. Over the years while active in the American Legion, Haskel made multiple trips to Washington, D.C. where he met with four presidents: Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush. He was also a member of the Disabled American Veterans (Chapter 59), ANIVICUS, 40 et 8 (Voiture 297), Veterans of Foreign Wars, and Masonic Lodge 414. He was instrumental in helping found the Jones County War Memorial in downtown Laurel and the Veterans Memorial Museum on Hillcrest Drive in Laurel. A highpoint for Haskel in recent years was when he and his family visited the National World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C. as he was a passionate advocate for veterans and their rights throughout his adult life.

Haskel was known to be an avid reader and crossword puzzle aficionado, who continued his education throughout his life by teaching himself American Sign Language and studying computer science at JCJC. He was preceded in death by his parents, daughter Patricia Jan "Patti" Smith, brothers Herman (Thyra), Grover (Flora), John (Bobbie Faye), Harry, and Solly; and sisters Marie Davis (Clewis), and Jessie Ruth Reed (Bud). He is survived by his wife Margie Simpson Smith, daughter Peggie Smith Gilbert and son-in-law Jeff K. Gilbert of Birmingham, grandson Kline Gilbert of Ann Arbor, Michigan, and sisters-in-law Mozelle Smith of Sulphur Springs, Texas, and Brenda Smith of Meridian, and a host of nieces and nephews. Pall bearers will be Randy Wall, Kevin Crowder, David Ford, Kevin Walker, Bill Laws, Donnie Brown, and Harold

Bynum.

Funeral services will be held at 2 p.m. Sunday, July 9, 2017 at Memory Chapel with visitation beginning at 12 noon Sunday. Burial will follow at Hickory Grove Cemetery. Rev. Mark Covington will officiate.

In lieu of flowers, the family kindly requests that memorials be made to Kingston United Methodist Church of Laurel, MS.

Cemetery Details

Hickory Grove Cemetery

Corner of Old Bay Springs Rd and 15th Street
Laurel, MS 39440

Previous Events

Visitation

JUL 9. 12:00 PM (CT)

Memory Chapel Funeral Home
3100 Audubon Drive
P. O. Box 674
Laurel, MS 39440
(601) 428-5235
memorychapel@comcast.net
<https://www.memorychapellaurel.com/>

Service

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Tribute Wall

LP

“ *Deepest Sympathy Extended. Praying For Peace and Comfort.*

*Sincerely
Linda Grafton Patterson*

Linda Patterson - July 10, 2017 at 07:51 AM

ES

“ *It saddens me to hear of the loss of this great man. He & my father were good friends & as I grew up, I too became his friend. Mr Smith helped me start my career as a law enforcement officer over 24 years ago & I am proud to say I'm still doing the job which he helped me achieve. You my friend will be dearly missed by all. GOD's speed to you & your family. Sincerely, Ellis Smallwood Jr*

Ellis Smallwood - July 09, 2017 at 03:57 PM

KT

“ *So sorry to hear this news of Hack's passing. He was always a very special friend to me and all my family. I will always treasure my memories of such kind man and his smiling face. All of you will be in my prayers.*

Karen Caldwell Townsend

Karen Townsend - July 08, 2017 at 11:04 AM

SS

“ In my first year in the newspaper business, Haskel took me under his wing and taught me valuable lessons I never forgot. I learned that first summer if you can stand the heat of deadline and the pressure to get the paper out, and didn't mind working, you could make it in this business.

One of my favorite Haskel quotes: "That's not how we did it in the hot type days!"

Haskel became a life-long friend. He had a stern look and that sometimes scared people off. But when you got past all of that, he was a very caring person.

I would tell people that Haskel trained me. Hewould say, "well he got away from me and went to Vicksburg. If I worked fulltime, it take six months to get him straightened out. probably never will,"

I will never forget the days of Louie, Mr. Bass and Haskel working so hard to make the Jones County War Museum come about. No telling how many chicken dinners were sold in those years. He worked hard for the veterans organizations.

With Haskel, you never had to guess where he stood on things. He worked hard and he loved his family.

Steve Swogetinsky

Steve Swogetinsky - July 07, 2017 at 11:43 PM

ML

“ I had the pleasure of working with Haskell at the Laurel Leader call back in 1975-1980. He was a great man. I respected his love for our country and for his service. May he Rest In Peace.

Marian Walters Long

marian walters ling - July 07, 2017 at 09:19 PM