



Leslie Hollis Tucker, Jr. (Hollis)

February 23, 1933 - August 20, 2017

Leslie Hollis Tucker, Jr. (Hollis), prominent Sarasota businessman and philanthropist, passed away peacefully with his family by his side on August 20, 2017.

A celebration of life will be held at Marina Jack's on Saturday, August 26 at 2 p.m. for family and friends.

Hollis was born in Sarasota on February 23, 1933, to Leslie Hollis Tucker, Sr. and Della Grace Arnold.

Hollis was a 7th generation Floridian and 5th generation Sarasotan, his ancestors having claimed 160 acres of land under the Florida Armed Occupation Act of 1842. His family home was on the Tucker family tract at Fruitville Road and Tucker Avenue, and he graduated from Sarasota High School in 1952 where he ran track and sang in the glee club.

When Hollis grew up Fruitville was a hamlet covered in orange groves and Fruitville Road was a dirt path leading to downtown Sarasota. His father served for a time as the Citrus Commissioner of Florida, and his grandfather F. H. Tucker was a founder of the Sarasota Citrus Growers Association and a principal on the Board of Public Instruction when the original Sarasota High School was erected in 1912.

His great-grandfather Jesse H. Tucker was appointed Postmaster of Cedar Tree in 1858, later served in the Civil War, and was the County Sheriff from 1871-1873 (it was noted in the Manatee River Journal that Jesse dropped off the largest rattlesnake rattle of the year at 28 rattles).

His great-great-grandfather, Reverend John H. Tucker, was a prominent Methodist and later Baptist missionary who covered a region that stretched from north of Orlando to south of Fort Myers. During the Seminole War he journeyed from fort to fort ministering to soldiers, "once travelling 2,000 miles in one year, an astounding feat for the time," and in 1845 he established the Eden Baptist Church at what is now Brooksville.

Hollis came up during the depression and war years and from an early age hunted to put food on his family's table. He began working at the age of 8 in the celery fields off Fruitville Road, then worked for a Dutchman growing sunflowers in Fruitville, worked at the local grocery store (later the A&P) as a butcher's assistant, and was a bicycle delivery boy for the local florist. His favorite route was delivering flowers every Saturday to Mrs. Palmer's mansion "the Oaks," now The Oaks residential development. Hollis also fished there with his father Leslie and has resided in The Oaks for the past 30 years (evidence that things really do come full circle).

Hollis served in the Army's Guided Missile Corps at Fort Bliss during the Korean War and attended Emory University where he studied dentistry.

After returning to Sarasota he ran into his friend Ronnie Foxworthy who was earning 25 cents more per hour than he was, prompting Hollis to quit his job and become a plumber. He and Ronnie started Rusty Plumbing in the 1950's, which thrived so quickly they decided to split into two businesses. They flipped a coin to divvy up the company name and the company truck - Hollis got the

truck, his mother Della suggested the name Arrow Plumbing, and over the next 50 years Hollis grew the business into one of the largest plumbing contracting companies in the Southeastern United States.

Hollis had many passions, especially his airboat camp in the Everglades and big game hunting in Africa where he returned dozens of times. He was a championship amateur boxer, a pilot, a race car driver and owner, and travelled the U.S. and the world hunting and fishing. He was famous for epic road trips, loading his family into a motor home towing a Volkswagen Thing and driving all over the country, including a six week journey from Sarasota to the end of the road in Homer, Alaska.

Later Hollis would meet his beloved wife Susan and they spent 35 years working side by side and exploring every corner of the world (and making the Florida to Alaska drive many, many more times over the years).

But chief among Hollis's passions was helping special needs children. He began supporting and working with Sarasota's Happiness House for handicapped children in the 1960's, and started the tradition of annual events with the kids, including a trip to the Sarasota County Fair, a day at the beach, and a Christmas Party. This continued after the public school system began accepting special needs children and eventually grew to include well over 100 children, with twice as many volunteers recruited by Hollis so that each child would have their own "buddy" for a day. Hollis then founded the Sarasota Foundation for Handicapped Children, and in the early 80's was asked if he would help launch an offshore powerboat race in Sarasota. He agreed on the condition that the proceeds go to the Foundation and, long story short, that effort grew into what is now the Sarasota Powerboat Grand Prix festival and the Suncoast Foundation for Handicapped Children. The Foundation has raised funds to construct over \$20 million in facilities, helped over 8,000

children, and in 2000 the Florida Center's Sarasota Campus was dedicated in honor of Hollis.

Hollis was a true gentleman and was known for his integrity, generosity, quick wit and charm. He lent a helping hand to countless friends and associates, always sharing the good fortune he earned through hard work with others. He was a Shriner and served for many years on the Board of the Tampa Shrine Hospital for Children. He was a 33rd degree Mason, served on the Boards of many corporations, banks and non-profits over the years, and in 2011 Sarasota's Argus Foundation awarded him its Lifetime Achievement Award in recognition of his lifetime of community service.

Hollis was known as a stand-up man you could always count on to do the right thing in good times or bad and -- literally -- helped build Sarasota into the thriving community it is today.

Hollis is survived by his wife Susan, his daughters Debra Lynn Stevens and Shelley Lane Tucker of Anchorage, Alaska; daughter Leslie Ann Tucker of Rome, Georgia; son Leslie Hollis Tucker III of Sarasota; daughter Kathy Hardee of Lake City, sister Karen Honnessey of Sarasota; and six grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.

He was preceded in death by his parents Leslie and Della and by his sisters Dorice, Faye, and June.

In lieu of flowers, contributions in Hollis's memory may be made to the Suncoast Foundation for Handicapped Children, <http://suncoastfoundation.com/> or by mail to Suncoast Charities, 2015 Tuttle Av. S., Sarasota, FL 34239.

Tribute Wall

J(

“ Susan,

Hollis was one of the greatest men I know. Working for you guys was one of the best jobs I had. So sorry for your loss. His stories were always entertaining.

Jen Skipper (Gleason) - August 30, 2017 at 12:00 AM

MS

“ Dear Susan, After Candy and I moved to New Orleans, we seldom got back to Palm to visit and spend time with you and Hollis. Hollis was one of a kind. They don't make many Men like Hollis any more. Please let me extent Candy's and my's deepest sympathy and prayers in your time of loss. Hollis will be missed and remembered!
Mike & Candy Stedem New Orleans

Michael Stedem - August 28, 2017 at 12:00 AM

LN

“ Dear Susan and Family - My thoughts and prayers go out to you. Hollis was such a wonderful inspiration to so many of us. What he did for so many local children with special needs impacting the lives of many. Truly an angel on earth, and I feel blessed to have know him.



Lucy Nicandri - August 26, 2017 at 12:00 AM

CA

“ *My thoughts and prayers go out to the family and to all whom were privileged to have known Hollis. Hollis was a person whom I looked up to as a young boy and followed much of his advice which molded me. He was especially good to my whole family always there in good and not so good of times. You were our shepherd and I will be forever thankful. My Father and Mother Bud and June Andrews were so very thankful. Hollis you truly will be missed but God has prepared a special place for you to rest within his kingdom.*
Respectfully Charley Andrews, USN/CWO/RET

Charley Andrews - August 24, 2017 at 12:00 AM

HZ

“ *My condolences to the Tucker family.*

Helene Zito - August 23, 2017 at 12:00 AM



“ *My thoughts and prayers to the family, you will be with dad again, RIP Mr Hollis. Love Troy Smith*



August 23, 2017 at 12:00 AM

MM

“ So many great memories from when I was a kid. Growing up with Debbie, Shelley, Leslie and "Little" Hollis we had alot of fun up at the old house on Desoto Rd. Dad and Hollis were good friends and I'll cherish memories from all the summer field trips with the horses to the beach for his special kids, young and older ones. A smart businessman, a memory like no other that I know. A great man for the causes he believed in. Loved this man, he will be greatly missed. Until we meet again.....

Melody Harris Mixon - August 23, 2017 at 12:00 AM

SC

“ Hollis Tucker one of the greatest men to have graced this earth. His generous spirit will live on in those of us whose lives he touched at a young age. Your acts of kindness will not soon be forgotten. I am sorry that we will not be in town to celebrate your life with your family and friends but we will celebrate you every day in all that we do. God Bless you.

Scott and Shelly Crofut

Scott and Shelly Crofut - August 23, 2017 at 12:00 AM

CJ

“ I have known Hollis for over 50 years when I was younger and working in insurance. He had a great group of friends that were always doing for others - Jack, Ron, Dorsey among others. RIP and thanks for all you did and your kindness to help others.



Cindy Jackson - August 23, 2017 at 12:00 AM

RK

“ *Our very own Superman. Hollis was a true hero among men. We love him and will miss him terribly. He was a special special man. We are so grateful to have had him in our lives. - with love Rolanda & Family*

rolanda kaiser - August 22, 2017 at 12:00 AM