

Russ James' Eulogy

Russ James was, and is, a wonderful guy! It seems funny to say, Russ James, when the only way we have ever said it before was, Tess and Russ. They were the perfect couple: Tess is glitzy and Russ was plain. Tess is loud and Russ was quiet. Tess is spice and Russ was sugar. But, Russ was also strength, courage, and... red, white and blue. Tess was the actress and Russ was the producer and director. We are all going to miss him a lot.

Ruth and I are snowbirds from Ohio. Or as Russ might say, "Damn Snowbirds from Ohio." After we retired from the Navy, and our civilian careers, we decided to spend the winter months on Perdido Key. The first night we were in town we went to the Officer's Club for Two for One night. We were sitting there noticing that retirees outnumbered active duty people about 10-1, when Tess and Russ appeared at our table and asked if we were new to the area.

We told our story and they insisted we join their table, so, she said, "you won't feel so lonely." We weren't feeling lonely, but that was Tess and Russ...making sure that everyone was included. They introduced us to the Adams, the Flythes, the Poths and the Stutzers ... all good friends of theirs. Russ was proud of his military career and enjoyed being with other military retirees.

We invited Tess and Russ to Ohio as part of their extended 50th anniversary celebration, and we had a wonderful time showing them off to our friends. They were in Ohio five days,

and every dress Tess wore was louder than the next. At a reception at our home, where Mayor Fender read a proclamation about their 50th anniversary, Tess wore the most sparkly, yellow and jeweled dress I had ever seen. I said to Russ, "She sure likes spangles and jewels." Russ looked at me and said, "I tell her if it ain't sparkley, don't buy it! I think she looks just right!" She did...and the love he had for her was all over his smiling face.

Our four years here has been made so much nicer because of Tess and Russ. There are now eight Ohio couples here, and the James' welcomed all of them with open arms. They had receptions when we came and Southern Breakfasts when we left for Ohio. They liked coming to our condo so much that I feel sort of responsible that they decided to move. Tess said it wasn't meant for Russ to go to their new condo, but Russ sure wanted Tess to get to go there.

My career was at a medical school. If I were asked now to teach a lesson on how to die, I would tell my students about the way that Russ did it. He worried about others, he didn't complain, he didn't ask for special favors, he was always nice, he was a gentleman...and above all, he would tell anyone who would listen that he had a wonderful family and a great wife.

He was everything he had always been, but even more so. I don't think I have ever seen a man more proud of his wife than Russ was of Tess...or she of him. There was, and is, so much for which to be proud. I'll bet he's wishing right now that he could buy her one more sparkley dress.

We will all miss this wonderful, gentle, strong and loving man. We all love you Russ... and we will miss you.

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