

## Bill W. Stacy

July 26, 1938 - January 4, 2024

Dr. Bill W. Stacy, age 85, of Cape Girardeau, passed away on Thursday, January 4, after a lengthy illness. He was surrounded by his loving wife of 34 years, Sue Varnon Stacy, his children, his brother, and other family members. Bill was born July 26, 1938, to Frank and Sarah Louise (Nelson) Stacy in Bristol, TN. His father died in 1941. During this time of great family hardship, they moved to Missouri, where Bill excelled in sports. Upon graduation from Jefferson City High School, he accepted a football scholarship to attend Southeast Missouri State College. While there he also played basketball, participated in Track and Field, and acted in the role of John Proctor in *The Crucible*.

After graduating in 1960, Bill was hired to teach speech and physical education and to coach football, basketball, and track at Malden High School. In 1967, he returned to Southeast Missouri State College to teach Speech Communication and Theater as he was completing his Doctor of Philosophy in Speech and Communications at Southern Illinois University. Bill lobbied with others to change SEMO from a college to a university designation, and in 1975, he was named the first Dean of the Graduate School of Southeast Missouri State University.

Bill then served as President of the University from 1979 - 1989. As President, he founded the General Education and Honors Programs. He made the decision to purchase The Brodsky Collection of papers and memorabilia dedicated to William Faulkner. The University's Center for Faulkner Studies

holds a Faulkner Conference biannually and is attended by people from around the world. He spearheaded the transition of athletics to the Ohio Valley Conference, and Bill was especially pleased to have secured state and local support to build the Show Me Center. His contributions to the growth of the Southeast campus also included the addition of athletic facilities on the north campus, the construction of a new Robert A. Dempster Hall of Business, the Roger F. Rhodes Hall of Science, Johnson Hall, the relocation of the University Alumni Center to the Sprigg Street location, and the Otto and Della Seabaugh Polytechnic Building.

In 1989 Bill was chosen to be the founding president of California State University in San Marcos, CA, the first new US public state university to be built in more than 20 years. He was tasked with recruiting the initial faculty, securing funding for construction, and defining the mission for the university. The new campus opened in 1992. His contributions to the growth of this institution included the Academic Hall, Science Hall I, and the University Commons. He also secured funding for the infrastructure to grow a 20-building, 300-acre campus. In addition, he secured private funding for the Kellogg Library and the Lucille Griset Spicer student loan fund. Today CSU-San Marcos serves more than 16,000 students.

Bill served as Chancellor of the University of Tennessee, Chattanooga from 1997 to 2004. During his tenure, he completed the development of doctoral programs in physical therapy and computational engineering, including The SimCenter, the first internationally-recognized research facility at UTC. Campus expansion during this time included the addition of dormitories that changed an adjacent underdeveloped area of land into South Campus housing, a major contribution to the public/private partnership that added to the development of the Chattanooga Riverfront. He also expanded the University Center and secured state funding for the Engineering, Mathematics, and Computer Science Building.

From 2004 until 2009 he served as Headmaster of the Baylor School in Chattanooga. In that role he led a transformative development campaign that

upgraded campus infrastructure, student facilities, and the athletics complex. He married Margaret Jane Cooper in 1958. During their marriage they raised three children: Mark, Sara and Jim. In 1988, Bill married Dr. Mary Sue Varnon, his loving companion and surviving spouse. Bill and Sue retired in 2009 after a lifetime of service to education. In 2013, they were jointly awarded the UTC Outstanding Service Award. Bill served as Chair of the Greater Chattanooga United Way and Secretary of the Memorial Hospital Foundation. He was past president of the Rotary Club of Chattanooga and served on the Board of Directors for Chamber of Commerce, the Tennessee Aquarium, Junior Achievement, and Allied Arts. Bill and Sue continued to enjoy being with old friends and making new ones. Bill particularly enjoyed being the coveted senior member of the team in local best-ball golf tournaments. Always the athlete, he could reach almost any green in Chattanooga from those “senior tees.” However, an April 2020 tornado landed within blocks of their Chattanooga home, and that provided strong motivation for them to move near family in Cape Girardeau.

Bill was a paragon of unquestionable character, moral conviction, and the most humble example of man. He was forever grateful for the kindnesses and encouragement he received from a wide array of people. He made friends easily, was always fun to be around, and was absolutely committed to bettering the lives of others, as others had contributed to his own trajectory of success – from being the first in his family to go to college, to earning his doctoral degree, on through serving three universities as their president. In keeping with his passion for the value of higher education, one of his greatest joys was knowing that each of his children and grandchildren had earned at least one college degree.

Bill was preceded in death by his parents, Frank and Louise Stacy, his stepfather, Charlie Altwater; his brother, Charles Stacy; two step-sisters, Mildred (Leonard) Shatola and Mary Ann (Glen) Gutwein; and brothers-in-law John Sam Varnon, Jr., Stanley Varnon, Mack Varnon, Stephen Rhodes Sharp

and Bob Cruse. He is survived by his wife, Sue Varnon Stacy of Cape Girardeau, his brother, Lynn (Kaye) Stacy of Jefferson City, step-sister, Pattie Thorp of Sedalia, Missouri; and sisters-in-law and brothers-in-law: Patt Sharp of Kennett, Deloris (Joe) Raffety of Clarksville, TN, Betty Cruse of Cape Girardeau, Nita Roodman (Toby) of Cape Girardeau, Betty Stacy of Diamond Springs, CA, Tony (Janet) Varnon of Cape Girardeau, and Richard (Suzanne) Varnon of Memphis, TN.

His children and grandchildren also survive: Dr. Mark (Tina) Stacy of Mount Pleasant, SC; Sara (Dan) Dyer of Nashville, TN; and Jim (Laurie) Stacy of Madison, WI; and grandchildren: Adam (Leah) Dyer, Bryan Stacy, Bailey (Landon) Cheben, Colin (Adrienne) Dyer and Andrea (William) Li-Stacy. He especially loved his three great grandchildren: Lydia and Mia Cheben; and Leo Li-Stacy.

Bill was known for a number of humorous or encouraging sayings. One he'd often repeat to a "too-busy-now" friend: It's going to take just as long to do this tomorrow or the day after as it will today, so let's just get it done.

Services will be held at Ford and Sons. Visitation will be 4:00 – 7:00 p.m.

Friday, January 12, and again at 10 a.m. Saturday. The memorial service will be Saturday, January 13, at 11 a.m., with a live-stream available on Facebook: <https://facebook.com/events/s/dr-bill-stacy-funeral/735056238504844/>. A private burial service will be held at the Fairdealing Cemetery (southwest of Poplar Bluff) at a later date. In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations be made to United Way.

Online condolences may be made at [www.fordandsonsfuneralhome.com](http://www.fordandsonsfuneralhome.com)

# Cemetery Details

## Fairdealing Cemetery

Fairdealing, MO

# Previous Events

## Visitation

JAN 12. 4:00 PM - 7:00 PM (CT)

Ford and Sons Mt. Auburn Chapel  
1001 N. Mt. Auburn Rd.  
Cape Girardeau, MO 63701

## Visitation

JAN 13. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (CT)

Ford and Sons Mt. Auburn Chapel  
1001 N. Mt. Auburn Rd.  
Cape Girardeau, MO 63701

## Memorial Service

JAN 13. 11:00 AM (CT)

Ford and Sons Mt. Auburn Chapel  
1001 N. Mt. Auburn Rd.  
Cape Girardeau, MO 63701

# Tribute Wall

GO

“ I played football with Bill at SEMO in the 60's. What a gentleman and friend. Gerald Patrick OConnor

Gerald OCONNOR - August 19, 2024 at 01:41 PM

LW

“ Dr. Stacy and I had many conversations. I am a SEMO graduate of 1989 in education. I worked for American Food Management while going to college. I would go to events early and set up the catering and food for whatever was happening. Dr. Stacy and I were often alone with the opportunity to visit. He was so supportive of my schooling and life. The day I graduated (without any great accolades of distinction), Dr. Stacy jumped up and gave me the biggest hug on stage when I received my degree, shocking my family of course, but giving me a memory I would never forget. He was a genuine man of kindness and caring. I wrote him many years later and again he graced me with a return letter. I will remember Bill Stacy with love and respect for the rest of my life.

Lynelle Lalk Weisz Class of '89

Lynelle Weisz - January 26, 2024 at 03:21 PM

FR

“ President Stacy saved my career at SEMO. There were conflicts between myself and another employee. I approached President Stacy, and provided him with my side of the story. I do not know who or how many' people he spoke with, but I was transferred to another department with a promotion.

Fran - January 20, 2024 at 01:14 PM

KM

“ We feel privileged to have Bill and Sue as our neighbors. Anytime that was spent visiting with them has been a blessing. Bill was a good and very kind person. We will miss him. Ms. Sue, please know that we will be happy to help with anything that you might need.

Kathy Mattes - January 13, 2024 at 08:40 PM

DC

“ Deepest condolences from CSUSM. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Bill W. Stacy.

Deepest condolences from CSUSM. - January 11, 2024 at 02:59 PM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Bill W. Stacy.



January 11, 2024 at 02:59 PM

PG

“ I met Bill when he was considering leading UTC and moving to Chattanooga. I was immediately impressed, and my respect only grew as our paths crossed in numerous ways. I am most grateful for his exceptional leadership at Baylor as my two children were there during his time and both loved him dearly. I offer my thoughts and prayers to his fabulous wife Sue and to the rest of his children.

Pem Guerry

Pem Guerry - January 11, 2024 at 12:25 PM

PS

*Thank you for your kind words.*

**Patt Sharp** - January 13, 2024 at 04:49 PM



“ *Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Bill W. Stacy.*



January 11, 2024 at 12:02 PM

HF

“ *Hengguang Li and the family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Bill W. Stacy.*

**Hengguang Li and the family** - January 11, 2024 at 12:02 PM



“ *Medium Dish Garden was purchased for the family of Bill W. Stacy.*



January 11, 2024 at 11:03 AM

DM

“ From Speech Professor to Dean of Graduate Studies and President of Southeast Missouri State University. I just wanted to share a few of the outstanding memories that I have of President, Dr. Bill Stacy. My first memory of Dr. Stacy was being a student in one of his Speech 101 classes which allowed me to garner the necessary skills I needed to be an effective communicator. Upon graduation, I began my career at Southeast Missouri State University, as a Freshmen Advisor and then became Assistant Dean of Minority, Handicapped/Disabled and Commuter Student Services. Dr. Stacy was a very strong advocate of diversity and through the creation of these areas, we were able to develop a broad spectrum of programs and services to enhance the students experiences and retention at Southeast. Dr. Stacy cared about all students and those that worked at Southeast. He encouraged the coordination of services/programs that would allow students of color to matriculate successfully and earned their degrees. He also put forth programs to help the athletes not only play on a team but to graduate. During his tenure the largest number over (800) of African American Students were recruited and enrolled at Southeast Missouri State University Campus. He welcomed diversity and wanted all students to be successful. My late brother Reginald E. Mitchell was one of Dr. Stacy's Graduate Assistant which allowed him to begin his career path with a great mentor and orator. I am thankful that Dr. Stacy granted me the opportunity to attend SIU-Carbondale University to pursue my Doctoral Studies when others had said NO. He was truly a champion to all. He also hired the late Dr. Edward Spicer as the Affirmative Action Officer for Southeast Missouri State. Together they made a dynamic team of professionals that created a supportive environment for the University students, faculty and staff. I remember when the Show Me was built under his leadership and one of our first entertainment Acts (1987) was the Late Tina Turner. Dr. Stacy truly enjoyed the performance along with so many of us. He encouraged me to continue to coordinate services for the diverse populations even when others felt it wasn't needed. He always showed respect and treated those he met with dignity. I am so truly grateful that I was blessed to begin my

*Professional career in Higher Education under the leadership of Dr. Bill Stacy.*

*To his family we are uplifting you daily in prayer and know that Dr. Bill made a difference in so many of our lives.*

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**Debra Mitchell-Braxton** - January 11, 2024 at 11:01 AM

PS

*Thank you, Debra. We've enjoyed your every word.*

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**Patt Sharp** - January 13, 2024 at 04:53 PM

RH

“ *It is my honor to call Bill a friend. Rich Hantak*

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**Richard Hantak** - January 10, 2024 at 03:37 PM

DD

“ *We are so sorry for your loss. We knew your dad many years at church and at SEMO. May the Lord bless you and comfort you in your loss.*

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**Donna/Bob Komorech and Virginia Davis** - January 09, 2024 at 04:59 PM



“ Saturday Night Live was in its infancy when I was in college at SEMO and one of the recurring sketches of the day was Mr. Bill, a Play-Doh character who was always getting into scrapes and doing something stupid. The punch line was "Oh no, Mr. Bill," just before Mr. Bill got hit by a truck or a snowball or something. Before long, it became common for students, upon seeing Dr. Stacy walking on campus, to call out "Oh no, Dr. Bill." It was like a chorus followed by laughter and Dr. Stacy would respond with good humor. I don't know if Dr. Stacy ever watched SNL or really knew Mr. Bill's cult following, but I will always remember Dr. Stacy with a smile as students called out "Oh no, Dr. Bill." As a student, I always found Dr. Stacy approachable and easy to talk with, always having time to talk to students and listen to their concerns. Count me as one proud that his signature is on my diploma.

*Diana Lambdin Meyer  
Class of 1980*

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**Diana Meyer** - January 09, 2024 at 03:10 PM

PS

*Thank you for sharing these memories; we especially enjoyed and laughed about the "Oh, no, Dr. Bill."*

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**Patt Sharp** - January 13, 2024 at 04:56 PM

JH

“ I was one of "Dr. Bill's" first students at SEMO in 1967, he was a great guy!

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**John Hodges** - January 09, 2024 at 02:01 PM



“ *Country Basket Blooms was purchased for the family of Bill W. Stacy.* ”



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January 09, 2024 at 10:14 AM

T'

“ One month before traveling to Washington, D.C. to start my journey as a Howard University student, my oldest brother, who was a graduate, shared his concerns with my parents about the crime and that my small town raising had not prepared me for what was happening in August 1987 in the District. Howard was THE ONLY institution I had applied for and was accepted. I didn't want to go to Lincoln University in Jefferson City, the place where my family has had presence since its inception, I could see the worry and concern on my parents face, it was thick and so I remember crying incessantly on the inside. I also remember going to assist my former journalism teacher, Patt Sharp, with an estate sale. And the tears just started flowing. Long story short, three weeks before the semester began at Southeast Missouri State University (SEMO), thanks for Mrs. Patt Sharp and her husband, the honorable Stephen R. Sharp (former State Senator and Judge), I received the Presidential Scholarship and was the student assistant to the president (which was a newly created position that I think disappeared once I graduated!) And so my desk where I "worked" two hours a day was right next to Dr. Bill W. Stacy! I was his eyes and ears when it came to student issues in general and Black students in particular. I served on various committees to advance diversity, equity and inclusion (but look at where we are today in this nation, just horrible) as well as on the University move from Division III to Division I. The Association of Black Collegians (ABC), which was the black student congress, received office space in the student union because of Dr. Stacy's listening to our concerns. Because of the perks of being Dr. Stacy's student assistant, I had the best seats for my parents to enjoy the opening performance at the Show ME Center...we were right smack dab in the late great Tina Turner's face. I had my FIRST plane ride with Dr. Stacy, traveling to the state capitol to lobby for resources in what was called "Legislative Relations Day with Ribs" the ribs came from the fabulous Dexter Bar-B-Que and we would feed all of the legislators on the appropriations committee! Yep, in those days, pork barrel politics was not unusual! But this was literal pork, LOL. Black faculty and staff began to reach out to me because I had the ear of the

*president and cabinet. My mentors, Dr. Debra Mitchell Braxton, Dr. Harry Schuler and Soror Dr. Bernice Coar-Cobb would be my feeder source for systemic change and it was because of the transformative leadership of Dr. Bill Stacy, the epitome of what a college president should be. A few years ago, as I was struggling with whether to finish up the PhD at the University of Nebraska, I contacted Dr. Stacy, who was then the Chancellor of the University of Tennessee--Chattanooga and the first words from his mouth, "Karla, I am so proud of you and all you have done!" Dr. Bill W. Stacy, thank you for being such an amazing example of goodness, grace and the embodiment of what a leader should be. Rest in Power, you earned it. Give my dad a hug in heaven, I remember you often asking about him and his Lincoln University and pro football days. And give Judge Sharp one too from me! In retrospect, I'm grateful that my oldest brother changed the trajectory of my life!*

*The Rev Dr Karla J Cooper, SEMO 1987-91*

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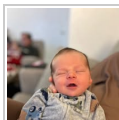
**The Rev Dr. Karla J. Cooper, SEMO '87-91** - January 09, 2024 at 08:32 AM



“*My condolences to the Bill Stacy family. I am the daughter of Dr. and Mrs. Ray P. Moore, long ago friends of Mr. Bill and Ms. Jane’s from Carbondale times, I believe. I have heard many a tale from long ago get-togethers of your parents and mine. All good times in their younger days. May you freely God’s peace during this time of grief. I am sorry for your loss!*”

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**Bettie Whitworth** - January 09, 2024 at 06:08 AM



*“Feel God’s peace”*

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**Bettie Whitworth** - January 09, 2024 at 06:09 AM

BH

“ *Condolences to all the family. Bill was a giant in every aspect of his life. It was an honor to work with him and know him as a friend. L.D. Brodsky and I were especially indebted to him for his encouragement and support of our work. RIP, good friend.*

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**Bob Hamblin** - January 09, 2024 at 01:36 AM

EM

“ *Sending Love and Peace to Mrs. Stacy, children, grandchildren, family, and friends. Thank you, Mr. Stacy, for founding California State University-San Marcos. Your work will nurture our generation and many generations to come, with education, community, a place to make friends, and a beautiful college campus full of nature and memories. Without your efforts I would not have such a wonderful place to attend college at and as a student I send gratitude for your life's work.*



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**Emily Mahmoud** - January 08, 2024 at 04:58 PM

CM

“ Dear Mrs. Stacy,

*Please accept my heartfelt condolences for the loss of your husband. I was a newly minted Ph.D. when I joined the faculty at CSUSM in 1994 under Dr. Stacy's leadership. I am particularly grateful for his support in establishing the César E. Chávez Plaza and statute to honor the one of the greatest heroic figures of the civil rights movement. I was so pleased to see Dr. Stacy when he accepted the invitation to return to campus for the 20th celebration of the plaza/statute. Dr. Stacy's leadership established a firm foundation for CSUSM to become the national leader in social mobility. Indeed, Dr. Stacy left a legacy in public education far beyond CSUSM, impacting the lives of so many. Well done, Dr. Stacy. Well done!*

*With warm regards,*

*Cynthia Chávez Metoyer*

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**Cynthia Chavez Metoyer** - January 08, 2024 at 03:07 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Bill W. Stacy.

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January 08, 2024 at 12:32 PM

BF

“ Beth&Ed Russell; Pattie Thorp & Families purchased the Memories 44" Sonnet for the family of Bill W. Stacy.



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**Beth&Ed Russell; Pattie Thorp & Families** - January 07, 2024 at 06:24 PM

GA

“ Glenda A. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Bill W. Stacy.

Glenda A. - January 07, 2024 at 12:09 PM

JB

“ John Cashion Bierk planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Bill W. Stacy.

John Cashion Bierk - January 06, 2024 at 04:14 PM

JB

“ John Cashion Bierk purchased the Full Of Love Bouquet for the family of Bill W. Stacy.



John Cashion Bierk - January 06, 2024 at 04:14 PM

“ ON THE DEATH OF BILL STACY, A LONG-TIME FRIEND

*During the academic year of 1958-59, I was a relatively new professor in the Department of English at Southeast Missouri State, as well as the new Adviser to the Sagamore, the college “year book.” In creating a “staff” to “produce” a Sagamore “year-book” for the college, I asked Bill Stacy, then a senior—and an end on SEMO Football team—if he would be the Sports Editor on the Sagamore Staff. Bill accepted my request, and so throughout that year, Bill, Mr. Paul Lueders, a leading photographer in the city, and I, documented in photos and text, the men, women, and events in SEMO intercollegiate athletics.*

*After receiving his MA Degree, Bill returned to SEMO State as an instructor in the Department of Speech. Thus, from having been my Sports Editor back in 1958-59, Bill Stacy was now my academic colleague.*

*In 1979, Bill Stacy, now Dr. Bill Stacy, was selected as the President of Southeast Missouri State University. Thus, from having been my Sports Editor, and then my academic colleague, Bill Stacy was now my President.*

*During Bill Stacy’s tenure as President of a university in California, and then as President of a university in Chattanooga, Tennessee, we exchanged Christmas/New Year greetings, and when Sue and Bill visited in Cape Girardeau, we had the chance for a more personal conversation.*

*It is, then, with sadness that I say a final goodbye to a long-time friend, but in doing so, I want to remind Sue, Bill’s wife, that although a death ends a life, it does not end a relationship, which means, Sue, that you have many good memories that will keep Bill always with you.*

*John Cashion Bierk*

**john c bierk** - January 06, 2024 at 04:05 PM

MS

*Thank you, John. I love you. Mark Stacy*

**Mark Stacy** - January 06, 2024 at 04:42 PM

PS

*Dear Dr. Bierk, thank you for sharing this wonderful line of memories. I know that Sue will cherish your kind words.*

**Patt Sharp** - January 06, 2024 at 05:46 PM

SD

*Thank you John for your kind words.*

**Sara Stacy Dyer** - January 08, 2024 at 12:57 PM

HC

“ *Hwy 54 Church of Christ (Jeff City) planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Bill W. Stacy.*

**Hwy 54 Church of Christ (Jeff City)** - January 06, 2024 at 02:22 PM

HC

“ *Hwy 54 Church of Christ (Jeff City) purchased the Serene Retreat for the family of Bill W. Stacy.*



**Hwy 54 Church of Christ (Jeff City)** - January 06, 2024 at 02:22 PM

KA

“ *Bill was an outstanding colleague and university President. He will be missed by many. I enjoyed working with him and learned from his leadership. Kala M. Stroup PhD 14th President of Southeast Missouri State University*

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**kala.stroup@gmail.com** - January 05, 2024 at 09:59 PM