



## James Tanner Smith Jr. (DOWNTOWN)

October 25, 1959 - January 22, 2026

James Tanner Smith, Jr. died Thursday, January 22, 2026 in Lawton, Oklahoma at the age of 66. He was born in Campbellsville, Kentucky to James Tanner Smith, Sr. and Blanch Josephine (White) Smith as the youngest of 11 children. Affectionately known as “June Bug” to his family, he learned hard work and discipline early by working on a farm in the hot summer sun. He befriended Thomas and Betty Hardin and they were lifelong friends. After graduating from Campbellsville High School, he went on to Eastern Kentucky University in Richmond, KY and earned a bachelor's degree in police administration with a minor in military science in 1981.

His military service encompassed 30 years of commissioned service that included ten years in the Kentucky Army National Guard and the remainder with the United States Army Reserves where he retired at the rank of Colonel in June of 2011. During his military career he served in various units and command positions which included Battalion Personnel Officer, Battalion Logistics Officer, Military Police Investigator and Division Anti-Terrorism Officer. Additionally, he had command assignments in Korea, Germany, Bosnia and Iraq. In his last assignment, he served as the Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officer, working with FEMA and the Indiana National Guard. His honors included the National Defense Service Medal, Iraqi Campaign Medal, Bronze Star, Army Commendation Medal and the Combat Action badge.

Concurrently, James also had over 30 years of comprehensive law

enforcement experience that began in 1982. He served three years with the Kentucky State Police as a State Trooper where he met dear friend/brother Jeff Moseley and 27 years with the Jefferson County Police, which merged into the Louisville Metro Police Department. James had diverse experience in patrol, traffic, accident reconstruction, narcotics/vice, internal affairs, personnel training, community policing, budgeting and organizational leadership, just a few of the internal venues that contributed to make this career whole. Of the 30 plus years experience, 24 of those years were in a command position having advanced through the ranks to the position of Major. While with the Louisville Metro Police Department, Smith was the Special Operations Division Commander where he was responsible for directing the following units: SWAT, Hostage Negotiation Team, Special Response Team, Joint Emergency Services Unit, Dive Team, Dignitary Protection Team, Bomb Unit, Peer Support, Mounted Patrol, Canine Unit, Traffic Unit, Air Unit, Honor Guard, River Unit, Community Relations and Special Operations Team. He was also a graduate of the U.S. Army Command & General Staff College, Southern Police Institute and Senior Management Institute for Police. In 2012, James accepted the call to serve as Chief of Police with the Lawton Police Department, selected after a nationwide search. In this role, he gave leadership to three divisions (law enforcement, correction facility and animal welfare), ~200 staff (175 sworn officers and 56 non-sworn staff) and an annual operating budget of over 20 million dollars with responsibility for the public safety of ~100K residents of Lawton/Ft. Sill, OK. Notably, he led the construction of the new state-of-the-art public safety building and correction facility, used progressive crime fight initiatives in high active areas that resulted in reduction in overall crime for consecutive years. He was active in community outreach including Town Hall Meetings to reduce violent crime, Neighborhood Watch meetings, the Cops and Kids Picnic; hosted Domestic Violence Symposiums, and spoke at many organizational engagements. James placed particular emphasis on employee wellness and established the Peer Support Unit and Police Chaplain Program that redesigned how the

department supported employees and emphasized their well-being. His career philosophy was, "It is most important to treat all citizens, regardless of their station in life, with dignity and respect. It is essential for a leader to treat employees as true members of the organization because every individual contribution is important and is key to the success of the organization." He served as president and past president of the Oklahoma Association of Chiefs of Police. In 2024, he was inducted into the Oklahoma Law Enforcement Hall of Fame in Oklahoma City. A year later in 2025, the Oklahoma Association of Chiefs of Police named him Large Agency Chief of the Year in recognition of his leadership commitment to officer wellness and service to the Lawton community.

Beyond his decorated career, James was a beloved son, brother, friend, father, and "Pop-Pop." He was an avid marathoner and history buff, who enjoyed a wide variety of music, a good pair of cowboy boots, a well-made watch, road trips, reading and audiobooks, and peace and quiet. Always proud of where he came from, the country never left him. While a man of few words, he spoke volumes with his facial expressions. Above all, he demonstrated his values and love in action.

He was preceded in death by his father and mother, siblings: Daniel Smith, Bobby Smith, Margaret Amanor, and Jessie Smith, and son, James Tanner Smith, III. He is survived by his siblings: Davine Graves Wilson (Melvin), Stella Nuckols, Pauline Shanklin, Caroline Ali, William Smith, and Mary Smith; partner, Jacqueline "Jackie" Seabrooks; daughter, La Toya McClellan (Kacheyta); grandchildren, Kameran, Cheymon, Kimani, Nia and Kai McClellan; a host of nieces, nephews, and cousins, and a faithful set of friends and associates to mourn his passing.

The family requests that in lieu of flowers, memorial contributions be made to the Wounded Warrior Project.

An online guest book and sympathy cards are available at [www.beckerfuneral.com](http://www.beckerfuneral.com)

Visitation: Friday, January 30, 2026 -9am-11am, St. Stephen Church, 1018 S. 15th street, Louisville, KY., funeral to follow at 11am, Burial: Saturday, January 31, 2026 Crown Hill Cemetery, Campbellsville, Ky.

# Previous Events

## Visitation

JAN **30**. 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (est)

St. Stephen Church  
1018 So. 15th St.  
Louisville, KY 40210

## Funeral Service

JAN **30**. 11:00 AM (ET)

St. Stephen Church  
1018 So. 15th St.  
Louisville, KY 40210

# Tribute Wall

CT

“ *My sincerest sympathy on the home going of your beloved husband, father and family member. James was a supportive steward to my family on the passing of my husband. God Bless Connie and his family on his passing.* ”

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**Cherie Todd** - January 30 at 11:30 PM

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“ *Rita lit a candle in memory of James Smith* ”



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**Rita** - January 28 at 03:02 PM