



Gary Smith

September 20, 1947 - September 12, 2016

Gary William Smith, 68, Cemetery Coordinator for the City of Gainesville Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs Department and retired assistant director of the Florida National Cemetery in Bushnell, died Monday at West Marion County Hospital after a seven year battle with Asbestosis and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease. Gary was born in Danville, Illinois, to Marden Smith and Dorothy Zappendorf on September 20, 1947. He graduated from Danville High School in 1965. While in high school he was the president of the Young Democrats; contributor to the editorial page of the Commercial News; and received many accolades and awards including one from the American Legion for Distinguished Achievement. After high school he joined the United States Navy in 1965 and served as a boilerman on board two U.S. Navy Destroyers, the Kenneth D. Bailey and the Claude B. Ricketts, for more than three years, traveling the world. He was honorably discharged from the U.S. Navy in 1968 and continued his inactive reserves until 1971. In August 1969, he attended the greatest rock concert of all time, Woodstock Music & Art Fair three days of music and peace. He had many great stories from Woodstock, including that after purchasing tickets for what ended up being a free concert he snuck under the fence and joined his fellow concert goers. He also helped roll a watermelon across the stage when Country Joe & The Fish was playing. On Sept. 5, 1970, Gary married Sally Eller at St. James Methodist Church in Danville, Illinois. Gary and Sally just celebrated their 46th wedding anniversary this year. They loved each others company and loved going to the

beach to read and relax. They were never to far from each other. After attending Danville Community College he continued his service as a nurse's aide at the Veterans Administration Hospital in Danville caring for other Veterans. When the National Cemetery was open in Danville, IL., he began his career as a cemetery care taker and later was promoted to the Cemetery Director Program with the National Cemetery System. Gary was the Director for many National Cemeteries where it moved him and his family around the country. His compassion, composure, and calm disposition allowed him to help families through their grief. He was a selfless man and we saw this in many areas of his life. Gary suffered from Restrictive Lung disease/asbestosis which he developed as a result of exposure to asbestos while serving as a boiler man onboard both U.S. Navy destroyers. While fighting his battle with COPD he continued to work full-time as a Cemetery Coordinator in Gainesville. He was a fighter and hard worker, which was a demonstration of his outstanding work ethic and selfless character. Gary had a love for sports, particularly the Chicago White Sox, the Chicago Bears, and the Chicago Bulls. He was a proud Florida State Seminole fan through and through. A keen observer of American politics, he enjoyed political banter and was hoping for a good outcome this November. He had a love for reading and yard work, and going to the beach. He loved being Papa to his three grandchildren and was lucky to spend many holidays and family celebrations with his children and grandchildren. He had a great sense of humor; his jokes and laughter will keep his memory alive for many years to come. Everyone who ever met Gary has a great story to tell about him. Gary was a practicing Buddhist and used his caring nature, spiritual beliefs, and compassion in all aspects of his life. Gary was staff Liaison with the Evergreen Association of Gainesville, Inc. and a member of the Communication Workers of America, City of Gainesville. Gary is survived by his wife, Sally Smith of Ocala, Florida; son, Jeremy Smith of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania; his daughter, Sybil Petrey and son-in-law John Petrey of Stokesdale, North Carolina; and three grandchildren, Caitlynd Smith and Isla and Wyatt Petrey; his step-mother, Virginia Smith of Danville, Ill.; his

sister, Sharon Crawford of Ankney, Iowa.; brother, Danny Smith of Hastings, New Zealand; and sister, Kathy Smith of Danville, Illinois; and many, many friends as well. A Memorial Service will be held at The Florida National Cemetery in Bushnell, Fl. on November 21, 2016 at 1:00 p.m. Memorial donations may be made for a bench in Gary's honor to the following:
Evergreen Cemetery Association of Gainesville, IncAttn: Gary W. Smith
Memorial Bench309 NE 1st St. A Memorial Service will be held at The Florida National Cemetery in Bushnell, Fl. on November 21, 2016 at 1:00 p.m.
Gainesville, FL 32601orMarion County Veterans Helping Veterans1527 NE 8th AveOcala, FL 34470<https://mcveteranshelpingveterans.nationbuilder.com/donate>

Tribute Wall

TS

“ We were very saddened by Gary's passing. For the past five years we have been fortunate to have Gary and Sally Smith as our neighbors. We couldn't have asked for a nicer couple to live next to. Gary was always cheerful, enthusiastic, inquisitive, helpful, and just fun to be around. He and Sally have always been real advocates for our community, Heathbrook Hills, which we very much appreciate. They have helped make our community a nicer place to be. We will always have fond memories of Gary and Sally living next to us.

Ted & Barbara Smith - September 27, 2016 at 12:00 AM

MI

“ Gary was a kind and giving man who touched many lives in his seven years with the City of Gainesville. His work family at Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs miss him deeply. His respect and honor for those who leave this earth and how they should be remembered, brought Evergreen Cemetery to a new level. His efforts, dedication and commitment live on in what he achieved here. Prayers to you Sally, Jeremy and Sybil and your families.

Michelle - September 19, 2016 at 12:00 AM

SH

“ My heart is breaking for you. I have so many memories of you. They make me smile and sometimes chuckle. I will always remember your laugh and the silly songs you made up. Your sense of humor helped us get through the rough times when we were just little kids. You were younger than me, but I always thought of you as my big brother. Love you forever.

Sharon - September 16, 2016 at 12:00 AM

HT

“ Thinking of you all. Praying that God will bring you His Comfort & His Peace. I remember seeing him last at Dad's funeral. Such a sweet, special man. We'll remember him fondly. Love to all the family. Larry & Holly

Holly Tetzloff - September 15, 2016 at 12:00 AM

JJ

“ Dearest Sally, Jeremy and Sybil, Gary was the best husband, father or friend which I have the pleasure of witnessing. He has a way of making you feel welcome and always knew what to say. Or maybe he didn't but he would find a way to enjoy any moment. What a beautiful person to have shared your lives with, you are so blessed to call him your husband and father (grandfather too). To know that he isn't suffering any longer hopefully helps to ease the pain of losing him. He's free and watching over all of you - smiling with that grin of his, and laughing with everything he has. I love you all, Joy

Joy and Joe - September 15, 2016 at 12:00 AM

NH

“ Dear Sally and family, I am so very sorry for your loss. I have many fond memories of Gary during the DJC days. He was always one of the good guys, full of life and good humor. My thoughts are with you now and always.

Nancy Finney Harlow - September 15, 2016 at 12:00 AM

GG

“ Barb and I send our Condolences and Deepest Sympathy for you and your entire family. My you find comfort in the love of your family and friends, in the special memories you have and in the strong and gentle spirit that surely remains with you. I was just getting to know Gary better and was struck with his calm and gentle manner. I feel that I am better for knowing him even so slightly. G-d Bless, good and loving thoughts from Barb and myself. Gary Green

Gary Green - September 15, 2016 at 12:00 AM

MS

“ Our condolences and best wishes to the entire family during your time of grief. Gary was a truly great man who had an abundance of stories, a wealth of good humor, and a loving compassion for his family. He will be missed.

Michael & Evelyn Serrano - September 14, 2016 at 12:00 AM

BJ

“ Sally, Jeremy and Sybil, I want you to know how sorry I am for your loss. Gary was a great man and I enjoyed working with him for many years. You guys will be in my thoughts and prayers.

Billy Johnson - September 14, 2016 at 12:00 AM