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John Hugh Jones

Nov 7, 2020



Jones

John Hugh Jones, former Assistant City Manager of Key West, died Oct. 26, 2020. He died at Jackson North Medical Center in North Miami Beach after months of declining health. He was 88 years old.

Early Years

John was born in Humnoke, Arkansas to John McCalla (“Mac”) Jones and Ruth Almo Williams Jones. When he was growing up, his father was in construction and the family moved repeatedly. He attended 26 elementary schools.

In 1944, John's mother married Samuel Higgs of Key West. John lived with his mother and stepfather in Key West, where he attended eighth and ninth grades. While in Key West, he worked as stock boy at the Broadway market that used to be at Petronia and Duval streets. John then moved to Georgia to live with his father. In 1949, he graduated from Southwest DeKalb High School in Decatur, Georgia. During his senior year of high school, he engaged in school activities and played football and basketball. He was voted "Most Dependable" and "Boy of the Year."

John attended Alabama Polytechnic Institute (now Auburn University). He left college to serve in the U.S. Navy. He later returned to Auburn and graduated from the School of Engineering in 1957 with a degree in Industrial Management. John was a life-long Auburn fan. He always wore his class ring and regularly wore Auburn-themed clothing. He followed Auburn football closely and enthusiastically yelled "War Eagle!" as he cheered on the Tigers.

John was stationed at the USN Key West Seaplane base from 1953-1955. At this time, he met his future wife, Ruth Rose Gibson. Ruth was a fourth-generation Conch and the daughter of Philip Gibson and Hilma Albury Gibson. Her grandfather, Samuel Gibson, owned the Gibson Hotel (now the Eden House hotel). Ruth was raised in Key West and graduated from Key West High School. She lived on James Street, just around the corner and a short distance from John's mother and stepfather on Grinnell. John and Ruth were married in the Key West First Methodist Church in 1954. Ruth died in 2016. They were married just a month short of 62 years.

Career in Engineering Management

After graduating from college, John initially ran a TV repair shop in Key West. In 1958, he accepted employment with Westinghouse Electric Corporation. John worked for Westinghouse in various management positions for 16 years. During this time he and his family moved to Atlanta; Overland Park, Kansas; Birmingham; La Grange, Georgia; and Miami. In La Grange, John was responsible for planning and

overseeing the design, construction, staffing and operation of a new coil manufacturing facility. John served as Plant Manager of this successful facility, which manufactured electrical coils for motors and generators.

After working for Westinghouse, John owned two companies based in Miami. He then worked for a series of engineering companies. He moved for these jobs to Bluefield, West Virginia; Tampa; Albany, Georgia; and Atlanta.

City of Key West

In 1993, John applied for and was hired for the job of Project Development Coordinator for the City of Key West. He moved to Key West from Atlanta, where he had been working for a Georgia electric company. He and his wife and son moved into Ruth's family home on James Street.

Within less than a year, John was appointed to serve as Acting Plant Manager for the City Incinerator, Acting City Engineer, and Director of Engineering. In 1996, John applied for the position of Assistant City Manager. He was selected to serve as Assistant City Manager after an extensive hiring process. He served as Assistant City Manager until his retirement in 2008. John was recognized for a long list of accomplishments and his dedicated service to the citizens of Key West.

Service

Throughout his life, John devoted time to community service through various organizations and churches. He was the president of the Atlanta West Kiwanis Club in 1989. In Key West, he participated in the Rotary Club and the Key West Maritime Historical Society. He was honored by many organizations for his service. He attended the Fifth Street Baptist Church.

Family

John was preceded in death by his brother, Robert C. Jones; sister, Nancy Jones Barsanti; half-brother Everette Jones, and half-sisters Sarah McCalla Jones and Margaret Jones Heibel.

He is survived by his son, John Philip McCalla Jones; daughter, Donna Ruth Jones (husband Mark Jonson); grandson, Jason Jonson (wife Lexi Rice); great-grandson, Ezra Frederic Jonson; great-granddaughter, Cassandra Rose Jonson; brother, Douglas M. Jones (a former Monroe County Commissioner); and brother-in-law, Ben Gibson and sister-in-law, Suzette Gibson. He is also survived by several nephews and nieces including Chris Valdez, Christine Valdez, Tracy Gibson Smigel, Nancy Gibson Kelman, Jason Jones; Leslie Lee and Carol Ann Blaich.

A memorial service will be held on Nov. 12, at 1 p.m. at the Fifth Street Baptist Church in Key West. There will be limited seating. Social distancing and face coverings will be required during the service. Burial will be in the Key West City Cemetery.

To plant a tree in memory of John Jones as a living tribute, please visit [Tribute Store](#).