



Thomas J. "Jay" O'Neill Jr.

November 24, 1940 - April 27, 2023

SHIRLEY: Thomas James "Jay" O'Neill, Jr. 82, died at home on April 27th in Shirley, surrounded by his loving family and amazing hospice care.

Jay was born in Montclair, NJ but was raised in neighboring Verona. He maintained friendships from Verona throughout his life. Interestingly enough, he did not know that his full legal name was not Jay O'Neill until the age of 16, when he went to get a driver's license. He attended F.N. Brown Elementary, Whitehorn Junior High, and Verona High School before heading to Rutgers for a degree in engineering. While at Rutgers, Jay was a member of the Glee Club and Chorus which culminated in performances at Carnegie Hall with Leonard Bernstein conducting, and a tour of Europe the year he graduated. He was very proud of singing for King Olaf of Norway at a music festival in Bergen as part of that trip.

After graduation, Jay first worked at Sikorski Helicopters, and then moved to Massachusetts for work at AVCO. His first work involved the heat shield for the Apollo program, then worked in design of thermonuclear devices (we don't call them bombs, dear) and nuclear survivability. Jay worked on underground testing out of New Mexico and Nevada, while at the same time pursuing education to become a yogi through Paramahansa Yogananda. He famously wore a No Nukes tee shirt to a company picnic.

After the Berlin Wall fell, work in his field disappeared and he retired from

AVCO.

His next adventure led him to book selling, first at Barnes and Noble and then to Borders Books in Nashua, NH. In 2005 while working at B&N, Jay met his second wife, Clare who was working down the street at Borders. They created a home in Shirley, and absolutely loved living on Squannacook Hill with visits from bears, foxes, deer and many birds. He collected art, loved music, ballroom dancing, reading and writing essays.

Jay fell ill with esophageal cancer in 2013. He rebounded well from treatment and surgery, but in 2021 began feeling effects of more sickness which eventually took his health.

Jay is survived by his wife of 17 years, Clare (Brown Underwood) O'Neill of Shirley, his son Colin O'Neill and his wife Pamela of Hudson, NH and their two daughters, Leah and Sarah, stepsons Ken Underwood also of Shirley, Will Underwood of Worcester. He is also survived by his sister Jill O'Neill of West Caldwell, NJ and her two sons Michael and Nicholas LaMura, and niece Dian DeBenedett and nephews Steven and James DeBenedett, also of New Jersey.

A celebration of Jay's life will be held at 4PM, on Wednesday, June 28th, 2023 at the Bull Run Restaurant, 215 Great Road Shirley, Ma 01464.

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

JUN **28**. 4:00 PM (ET)

Bull Run Restaurant
215 Great Road (Rte 2A)
Shirley, MA 01464

Tribute Wall

AN

“ I knew Jay by voice before I ever met him in person. I worked at Borders while he was working at Barnes & Noble, and booksellers from the two stores would call back and forth whenever we didn't have a book in stock for a customer. We had many pleasant little chats in those days. And I remember what I think was Jay and Clare's first date: a bunch of us from Borders got together at Applebee's, but when Clare arrived, she went and sat with a strange gentleman in another booth. Imagine our shock when we found out that he was Jay from B&N! That's like consorting with the enemy! 😏 But then he came to work for Borders, and he and Clare got married, so it all worked out in the end.

Clare, I'm so sorry to hear about Jay's passing. He was such a kind and unique man, and the world will be a little bit less interesting without him. You and your family are in my heart.

Anne Naugler - May 05, 2023 at 09:59 PM

AL

“ All of my memories of Jay are fond ones. He was a great guy and I always had good times while in his company. One particular memory I have of him is when he was visiting his Mom and Dad in Verona. It was summer time and he drove down in a replica MG which he either built or bought. His car was absolutely beautiful. He and I went for a long ride all around Verona. His car was very cool. I had a lot of fun with him that day which i have always held dear. I did not see Jay as much as I would have liked to because we lived far away from each other. He will be missed and I would like to express my condolences to his family.

Anthony LaMura

Anthony LaMura - May 04, 2023 at 09:49 AM

ML

“ When I was a young boy, maybe about 8 or 10 years old, my Uncle Jay came to Christmas at our home. I’m not sure what got into him that year, but he must have brought me like 7+ presents! One of the gifts I will never forget was a Remote Control Sphere. (Remember this was 1990 maybe).. The only reason I could imagine to pull a stunt like this would be to give a kid a Christmas he wouldn’t forget, and so with a tip of my hat I say, “mission accomplished Sir”.

Years later he gifted me an audio CD by Eckhart Tolle that I highly recommend. It’s message of a couple hours was precise enough to leave a lasting impression on the listener for a lifetime.

Jay and I shared a few particular interests, including chemistry, engineering, and the way of the Buddhist Monk. His memory will live on in those of us whose lives he touched.

I can only imagine the fantastic discoveries he is making on his journey beyond-

Michael LaMura - May 03, 2023 at 07:57 PM

BW

“ To Clare and the rest of Jay's family, we trust that precious memories of the wonderful life and times you shared with Jay will comfort you at this time of your loss but even more assure you he will always be close by your side going forward. Know that his friends and classmates, too, join in a sorrowful tear for now, soon to be replaced by a smile of thanks and remembrance for Jay being a special part of our lives.

Bob and Val Watson

Bob and Val Watson - May 01, 2023 at 01:29 AM

JO

“ I have too many memories of Jay to pick one to mention. He was a great big brother to me and I know he found his soulmate in Clare. He was brilliant, caring, witty and he was my mentor and teacher when I was young. He will be greatly missed. Jill O'Neill

Jill O'Neill - April 30, 2023 at 09:35 AM

NR

“ The one memory that stands out to me, aside from the great joy Jay and Clare had in finding each other, is meeting Jay at Rose of Sharon on a Friday with a gorgeous bouquet of flowers for Clare. We chatted and after he left, I was told that Jay bought Clare every single Friday that he was able. That was the thing about Jay, he was quietly over the top and very romantic. I'm sure that companionship will be what dear Clare will miss the most. May his memory be a blessing.
Niki Rockwell

Niki Rockwell - April 30, 2023 at 07:06 AM