

# James David "Dave" McCloskey

James David (Dave) McCloskey went on his final sleigh ride to Heaven 02/12/2021 after a lengthy illness.

Dave was born November 1, 1940 in Salem, Ohio. He leaves two sons, David, and Edward (Denise) McCloskey of Paris, Tennessee., a sister Jayne Ann (Thomas) Lange of Columbia Station, Ohio. He leaves grandchildren Mark (Nicole) McCloskey of MD and Michelle (Jared) Riley of Virginia. His Great-Grandchildren Camille, Madeline and Wyatt McCloskey and special friends Dennis Freeland (Lynn) and family in Florida, Aaron (Della) Gorelick in New York, many nieces, nephews, step-children and scores of friends for life.

Graduating from Lakewood High School in 1958, Dave started his adult life in Cleveland, Ohio. At Buckeye Biscuit company, he worked in the warehouse, as a truck driver, supervisor, and eventually company executive. A true ground floor to front office accomplishment. During this period, he learned American Sign Language so he could communicate with a Deaf employee. This inspired Dave to transition to the field of Sign Language interpreting at a time when seeing interpreters at public events and announcements was not as common as it is today. He was active in Cleveland politics, served on numerous public boards, and was on the Board of Directors for the Cleveland Clinic. He was a vocal member of the Teamsters Union and acted as a moderator between union and non-union employees.

As a professional Sign Language interpreter, he could be seen interpreting for presidential speeches, court cases. and at local hospitals for doctors, nurses, and patients. He enjoyed bringing the live concert experience to Deaf and hard of hearing people at venues like the Falcon Ridge Folk Festival and The Great Hudson River Revival (aka the Clearwater Festival) America's oldest and largest festival of its kind. He interpreted everything from folk music, to country western, hard rock, and rap in Cleveland, Utica, Rochester, and at the New York State Fair. Among his favorite entertainers to interpret for were Kenny Rogers and Charlie Daniels.

His #1 true calling and joy was being Santa at Great Northern Mall in North Olmsted, Ohio. A physically natural Santa Claus with the personality to match, for over 22 years he brought joy to children and parents alike. He has been photographed thousands of times; generations of families have his picture in their homes. Dave was also the Santa model for American Greetings Company Christmas cards, wrapping paper and holiday gift bags. Generous with his time, he enjoyed appearing as his friend Santa at Christmas parties, the Deaf Rotary Club, Schools for the Deaf, and friends' homes whenever invited. Dave was also the Santa in the fire truck at the rear of the Christmas parade waving and tossing treats to children along the route. When in costume or mistaken by children for Santa he never, ever broke character. He was always the kindest, gentlest, Santa Claus that one could ever meet. His #1 joy of all was the moment when a Deaf child would sit on Santa Claus's lap and realize that they could talk to Santa just like the hearing children. Those smiles and bright eyes are his most precious memories.

Later in life, he worked as an interpreter at the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID) at the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) where he interpreted in the college classrooms and for extracurricular activities. Much beloved by faculty, staff, and students he

received numerous awards over the years. A few examples include: the Outstanding Interpreter Award from the NTID Student Congress in 1998, induction as a member of the Golden Key National Honor Society in 1999, and the NTID National Advisory Group's Outstanding Service Award in 2005. He was the RIT Staff Retiree recognized in 2018 for Outstanding Service to the Institute, the first and only interpreter to ever be honored in this way,.

Dave was a philanthropist, supporting many individuals and organizations. Examples include the Resource Center for Independent Living (RCIL in Utica, NY), We the Deaf People (a national education and advocacy organization), and the RIT Celebration of Community Fund that he established and endowed in 2005 that provides "financial support for programming to bring together hearing, deaf, and hard-of-hearing students" in events and activities annually. He retired from RIT due to health concerns in 2016.

At the end of his life, Dave was well cared for by his loving family. First in Paris, Tennessee; later in Waverly; Tennessee at the Waverly Health Care Center, where he continued to wow the residents and staff with his kind and generous ways. Some things never change.

Always active, involved, and engaged, Dave was quoted as saying "When you love your job as much as I do, it's not called work". And throughout it all...he did it his way. Rest in Peace, Dave; beloved dad, grandpa and friend.

A celebration of life will be held in Rochester, NY at a later date. Donations may be made in Dave's memory to a charity of your choice.

Funeral arrangements are under the care of Ridgeway Funeral home in Paris, TN