

Van Henry Savell



July 23, 1941 ~ August 23, 2021

Van Henry Savell (80) was born July 23, 1941, in Greenwood, MS and died August 23, 2021, in Denham Springs, LA. He is survived by his wife, Shirley Ann Salley Savell, children Van Jr (Barb) and Marianne Savell, five grandchildren Matthew (Jamie), Jonathan, Daniel (Gabbie), Sarah (Micah) and Hannah, and two great grandchildren Hezekiah and Allie Mae, sisters-in-law Bettye, Sue, and Wanda (Bill) and four nieces and their children as well as the Lund family in Seattle, WA (Karen, Mark, Jake, and Hannah) who became family to the Savells. He was preceded in death by his dad, Carmon Savell, mother `Gwendolyn (Johnson) Savell and two younger brothers, Rick and Doug.

Van was the son of a Mississippi Baptist preacher and as such lived in numerous small to medium sized towns all over the state. He graduated from Iuka High School and after one year at Mississippi College (where he majored in "Bridge" while also working at the Clarion Ledger) he left and worked full time for the Associated Press. His work as a young college age writer allowed him to cover the integration of Ole Miss by James Meredith for the AP in 1963. He was sued for libel due to his exposure of leading oppositionist former General Edward A. Walker in a case that went to the Supreme Court, judging in the AP's favor. His journalistic career led him to Kansas City, Memphis, Rochester NY and Long Island NY as well as stops in Atlanta and Tupelo, MS.

Van's journalism career was focused on education becoming the Education Editor for the Rochester Democrat & Chronicle that led to a project for the Ford Foundation in NYC eventually leading him to a new career as Head of Communications for the Brevard County Schools in Titusville, FL during the early 1970s.

This move proved life changing. During the mid 1970s (besides becoming a competitive bass fisherman) God began to change his heart and through the ministry of Park Avenue Baptist Church his life was radically altered. He soon started serving as the director of the junior high youth ministry. From this time forward his life became one of teaching and discipleship. In 1978 his position with the school system was eliminated and he was ordained by his local church. He soon entered full time ministry and by 1980 was a youth pastor in Westlake, LA.

A brief interlude back in Titusville (where he worked for NASA installing tiles on the space shuttle) was followed by longer term ministry in Denham Springs in the early 1980s leading to the founding of New Covenant Baptist Church). In 1985 he was called to be a pastor of a small church in Escanaba, MI, followed by ministering in churches in Seattle, WA and Blythe, CA. He retired in 2017 and moved back to Denham Springs due to long standing friendships. During his retirement, he went back to his editing days helping several authors by editing their books after having edited several books by Peter Lord. His life was full of teaching and discipleship and a strong commitment to the Bible and to loving people. "The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." 2 Timothy 2:2

Once you were a friend of Van you made his Rolodex (and later his iPhone contact list). It didn't matter if he only knew you from 3rd grade, you were VERY likely to get a visit from him on one of his travels. Van loved to travel and see people he knew and loved. In Titusville, our church had pastor conferences every year and our family hosted a couple from somewhere in the Midwest. These couples became lifelong friends for Van and Shirley (and often were visited on their travels).

2020 and 2021 have been hard years. Van lost close friends Don Tuttleton and Dr. Ed Walker and friend and spiritual mentor Peter Lord (pastor in Titusville). While Van's family mourn his absence from them, they rejoice in his presence with the Lord Jesus Christ.

The family are extremely grateful to friends in Denham Springs who have been so comforting and gracious to us.

A memorial date will be held later in the year.

