



James Charles Smith

March 6, 2023

James C. Smith of New Orleans, Louisiana passed away peacefully of natural causes on March 6, 2023. He was 86 years old. He was the first-born son of James Charles Smith and Annie Lee Keys and entered this world on July 27, 1936.

His education journey began at Lee Station Elementary School (changed to McDonough #40) in New Orleans. He went to Joseph S. Clark High School, took part in Bayou Boys State and then attended Southern University in Baton Rouge, and participated in ROTC throughout. After graduating and securing a ROTC commission to serve as an officer in the U.S. Army, James C. Smith went on to proudly serve in the military. He graduated from many military courses throughout his career. While still in the military at one of his last duty stations, he acquired a Master's Degree in Business Administration from St. Mary's University in Norfolk, VA., where at the time, he was the first African American to receive a Master's Degree from that university.

While serving in the U.S. military, James C. Smith was successfully promoted throughout his illustrious career, attaining the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. As an Infantry officer, he commanded troops, served in various military units, and was assigned to many locations all over the world, including multiple tours in Vietnam. In addition to being an Army Ranger, an Army Airborne Master Parachutist paratrooper and awarded a Combat Infantryman's Badge, he was

also awarded numerous military commendations including the Bronze Star, before retiring after twenty years of honorable service.

James C. Smith always had an entrepreneurial spirit and a unique drive for success. After concluding his military career, he went to work for the General Electric Corporation. He was selected for GE's Fast Track Management Program and managed largescale programs for the corporation until he decided to follow his entrepreneurial spirit to start and run his own company. As the President and Owner of SEMA, Inc., James C. Smith grew a small minority-owned business through the Small Business Administration Selection 8(a) program into a multimillion-dollar firm in information systems. At the height of the company's existence, SEMA was one of the largest minority employers in New Orleans, managing government contracts in three locations across the United States, including for the Departments of Defense, Energy, State, and Transportation, as well as FEMA and the EPA. For his success in growing the company, James C. Smith was awarded the Black Enterprise Inc. Entrepreneur of the Year Award. The company was also featured for ten years straight in Black Enterprise Magazine's Top 100 Black-Owned Companies in the nation. Later James C. Smith shut down the company to devote his time and energy to serving on the Board of Directors for Liberty Bank, among the top Black-owned banks in the country, which celebrated its 50-year anniversary last year. He remained an active board member for nearly two decades and was still on the board when he passed away.

James C. Smith led a vibrant social life. He was an active member of several prestigious fraternal organizations, such as:

- Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., Fraternity, established at Howard University in 1911, with over 700 chapters throughout the country and worldwide. Member since December 1958.
- The Studs Club, a civic, social and pleasure club, founded in 1946. Member

since 1999.

- The Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity, Inc., known as The Boule, in New Orleans. Founded in Philadelphia in 1904, The Boule is the oldest African-American fraternity in the country. Member since May 2000.
- The Bunch Club, the well-known African-American Mardi Gras Carnival Club in New Orleans, founded in 1917. Member since May 2000.

James C. Smith is survived by his siblings Jesse Smith, Helen Smith and Charles Rush; his first wife of thirty years, Melba A. Smith-Dudley and the mother of their four children; his children, Rodney Smith (Leesa), Michael Smith, Wanda Radler (Dave) and Donna Murphy (Don); ten grand-children: Lauren Smith, Matthew Smith, Mycah Smith, Brendan Murphy, Breauana Smith, Alana Jimenez, Malique Smith, Fallon Murphy, Kayla and Nathan Radler; and three great grand-children: Jordan, Isaiah and Isabella Smith.

James C. Smith will be remembered for his ebullient personality and his drive for success. He touched many lives, and left an impact that will carry on his legacy. He was loved and admired by friends and family alike.

Relatives and friends of the family are invited to attend a Celebration of Life at 10:00 AM on Thursday March 23rd., 2023 at D. W. Rhodes Funeral Home, 3933 Washington Ave., New Orleans, LA. Visitation will begin at 8:30 AM with livestreaming set to begin @ 9:50 am by visiting www.facebook.com/D.W.RhodesFuneralHome/live. Internment: Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington, Virginia. To sign the guestbook please visit www.rhodesfuneral.com. Services were entrusted to D.W. Rhodes Funeral Homes, 3933 Washington Ave., New Orleans, LA 70125.

Previous Events

Visitation

MAR **23**. 8:30 AM - 10:00 AM (CT)

Rhodes Funeral Home - Washington Avenue
3933 Washington Avenue
New Orleans, LA 70125
(504) 822-7162
<https://www.rhodesfuneral.com>

Funeral

MAR **23**. 10:00 AM (CT)

Rhodes Funeral Home - Washington Avenue
3933 Washington Avenue
New Orleans, LA 70125
(504) 822-7162
<https://www.rhodesfuneral.com>

Tribute Wall

JG

“ I'm so sorry to hear this, but I felt something was not right. We were Facebook friends for years & I loved his sense of humor & honor to his Family of whom he spoke so highly ♡♡
Rest Easy My Friend-You are Missed 🙏❤️

Jan Gayle Gaston - October 10, 2023 at 08:54 AM

SM

“ I remember being a part of the early SEMA years and appreciate the opportunity of working with him. He was an excellent mentor and leader. Thank you Mr. Smith and family and may God continue to Bless the family.

Sebastian Murry - March 25, 2023 at 04:05 AM



“ Blue Caribbean Bouquet was purchased for the family of James Charles Smith.



March 22, 2023 at 12:00 PM



“ Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of James Charles Smith.



March 21, 2023 at 03:52 PM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of James Charles Smith.*



March 21, 2023 at 03:06 PM



“ *Jerome Newsome and Family purchased the Sweet Tenderness for the family of James Charles Smith.*



Jerome Newsome and Family - March 21, 2023 at 01:21 PM



“ *Charles and Marie Anderson purchased the Heavenly Grace Spray for the family of James Charles Smith.*



Charles and Marie Anderson - March 21, 2023 at 10:54 AM