



## Francis James Smith, Jr.

March 3, 1940 - November 6, 2022

Francis James Smith Jr. was a man unlike any other. His intelligence, sense of humor and warmth could never be duplicated, and he was the definition of mental fortitude. Francis' life was anything but easy, but you would never know by his sly smile or the wickedly dry and occasionally inappropriate humor that would leave anyone doing a double take while cracking up. The legend of Francis begins in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, but before the permanent tarnish of Steeler country could stick on him, he and his mother, Dolly Bray, relocated to start a new life at 213 South Stricker Street in Baltimore, Maryland. Raised under the firm guidance of his father, William Bray, Francis went on to graduate from the renowned Baltimore Polytechnic Institute, aka Poly. Founded in 1883, Poly was created for preparing boys to enter into math and engineering fields, and was the first Maryland public high school to fully racially integrate in 1952.

This background shined through Francis and the bright, guiding light that he was in so many lives, with his incredible mastery of numbers from woodworking/construction measurements to financial accounting, and his unbiased mind when it came to people of all colors during a time of incredible ignorance and prejudice.

Once he graduated Poly, he and his best pals Ron Austin, Jimmy Miller, Ed Trott, Jimmy Harrison and Pat Delaney entered the military on the buddy

system in 1960. Of course, Pat had to binge eat a whole banana farm to make weight for recruitment office. However, that soon paid off for lucky Delaney, with his military post being four grueling years in Hawaii. One of Francis' other dearest friends, Lou Hinkel, would have made it to serve with the rest of the guys, but Lou had an important quarterly earnings meeting at the Gandy Dancer as a well-established investor in the business.

Entering the service as Private Smith E-1, Francis would soon find himself going from the pavement of Stricker to the permafrost and unforgiving conditions of the Aleutian Islands in Alaska. Once he endured the grind of boot camp, the achievements started piling up: decorated as a Marksman; graduation from Signal Corps school in the Army after 14 condensed, intensive weeks of service education; successful completion and superior ranking in Countermeasures Search Specialist and Battle Indoctrination courses.

Going from one of the ghetto boys of Bmore to a 20-year-old instructing at Fort Dix on spy satellite tracking and radar technologies to people many years his senior and well-advanced in their careers was just how advanced Francis' mind was at an incredibly young age during the peak of the Cold War in the U.S. With Russia's spy satellite Sputnik lurking in the distance and Communist pursuits globally, Francis and his generation were living history. He rose to the rank of PFC-E3 in one year before receiving an honorable discharge from the military after being diagnosed with a debilitating neurological disorder.

Despite being unable to pursue a rapidly blossoming career in military service, Francis never complained and just went to work. His father got him started with an electric technician position at Westinghouse, where Bill Bray quickly learned one of his son's many gifts, sleeping with his eyes open. Nap times didn't last long with his dad keeping watch, and the work ethic that was immediately instilled in Francis.

Joining shipping/trucking company ET&T Leasing in the late '60s, he quickly rose to Vice President where he eventually met the love of his life, Dona — though Francis would always be eager to remind her how he paid her too much at \$1.85 an hour. Raising kids from previous marriages on week to week wages, and getting a rare treat when they would have 6 dollars of disposable income to spend on those special weeks, Francis & Dona held it together and could not have been better parents to their children.

After he sent his wife off to work, Francis soon began planning an escape route: to the woods. Hunting camp was a fixture in his life, and even when renowned truck-slaying marksman Uncle Wilson was taking out Broncos left and right, Francis was always eager to peer out over the plains, eyes searching for a pronghorn antelope. And he always knew Bob Corn would be circling the perimeter on foot, covering 20 miles at a time, to keep their hunting sanctuary secure.

Wyoming, Montana...the land of the Great Plains became his second love after Dona, and they both traveled this country and continent like no others. True love is driving the Alaskan highway together, and they hit everything on their list from coast to coast; all with no smartphones or Wifi, believe it or not. Having a handicap did not limit for much of Francis' life, and it certainly never defined him. Even when given a less than 10% chance of surviving an aggressive form of lung cancer, he did not give up and was making others laugh and smile while he had to battle every day.

From taxes to taxidermy to handcrafted 'tater boxes, Francis was a renaissance man through and through. In the end, much like another super-cool Francis with a last name that starts with an S, Francis Smith did it his

way. One of his favorite actors was seminal tough guy John Wayne, but when it came to toughness, to be blunt, Mr. Wayne didn't have shit on Mr. Smith. He is survived by the love of his life, wife Dona; children Danielle, David and Francis; and sister Blanche.

# Tribute Wall

MM

“ *Mr. Fran was always inviting and respectful every time I visited their home. I always made sure to grab some time with him when possible. Sometimes I've rooted for the Denver Broncos for the simple reason that he was a fan. I'll miss you, Mr. Fran. You were one of the good guys.*

---

**Matthew McCusker** - January 24, 2023 at 09:43 AM

AN

“ *Annette- Freund and hairdo QUEEN\n\nI will truly MISS our crazy conversations!!!! I'm BLESSED to have a great decent supporting friendship we had. Until then sir,,,,,,rest well!!!*

---

**Annette-** - December 23, 2022 at 12:20 PM

KV

“ *Francis James Smith, Jr.*

---

**Karen Vargo** - December 15, 2022 at 03:22 PM

BB

“ Francis was the most generous, caring brother a sister could ever have. He was my designated baby sitter and I am pretty sure he was glad that mom and dad did not go out a lot. I will confess that to say the least I was a very difficult child but he was never mean or neglectful. I remember one of those nights I threatened to run away and find mom and gathered all the shoes I owned, one pair at a time, until there was a pile of about 20 pair on the floor which he guarded and said he could not believe a kid could have so many shoes. He was probably not thrilled when he had to share mom with the new kid. My first clear memory was when I had measles and I looked out the bathroom window to see him taking the wheels off my tricycle to use on his go cart and screaming for mom "to get him" . Our 8 year age difference, although making a big gap, when I was young I remember idolizing my big brother. When I got older I always loved spending time with him and realizing what a wonderful, smart, generous and loving man I had the honor of sharing my life with. I love you Fran and will miss you til we meet again.

---

**Blanche your grateful and loving sister Bray** - December 09, 2022 at 11:51 AM

TF

“ We are all going to miss you Fran. You were the best. Condolences to the family, so sorry for your loss

---

**The Bilson family** - November 29, 2022 at 03:36 PM

TM

“ I miss you Old Man, more then you would know. You helped me in so many ways and was always there for me. When I was trying to get my ged, class ended and you picked up where they left off. Thanks to you I passed and received my diploma. I'm forever grateful and will miss you LOTS. You will always be in my heart and when we meet again I will be topless just for you.\nYour favorite sister in law, Toni

---

**Toni Mattio** - November 29, 2022 at 10:41 AM

JB

“ Uncle Fran was a true example of America’s finest man. Simply honorable.

---

**Julia Bilello** - November 27, 2022 at 02:31 PM

SF

“ On November 6, 2022, I lost my best friend who was also like my older brother. I knew Fran, Dona, and their children for over 40 years. Throughout that time I met so many friends of theirs that I always felt like I was part of the family. Fran and I tried our hand at a couple of things when I was planning on retiring from the Navy. We cut out Christmas reindeer, tried home improvements at Delaney's bathroom, made shadow boxes, and even tried our hand at chimney sweeping where Fran said I am not going up on the roof and I said not problem. He was the brains and I was the brawn. I have so many great memories of him. I was always seeking his advice on one thing or another and believe it or not his advice was always right on. My life was better because of him and I am so proud that I had the opportunity to have such a wonderful person in my life. Fran and Dona were so much like family that I had an open invitation on Super Bowl Sunday if only to come over say hello and eat an Italian Susage or two. The world has lost one of the Best of the Best. I am going to miss him every day. I promised him that I would keep in touch with Dona and the children and they know that I am here if they need anything. \nSkip

---

**Skip Furlong** - November 27, 2022 at 12:15 PM

MC

“ I loved Fran from the day I met him. We had a mutual love for horse racing and everything sports related. I admired him for his intelligence, sense of humor, and his bravery. Fran never complained and lived life to its fullest. \n\nHe was a great friend and his death has left a void in my life. \n\nMarv

-----  
**Marvin Carter** - November 27, 2022 at 10:46 AM

DM

“ The smartest person I've ever known, my FATHER was the definition of a great man ❤️ Always in my heart and in my head telling me to save for the future- I LOVE YOU AND MISS YOU DAD  
❤️

-----  
**Danielle Moffatt** - November 27, 2022 at 08:53 AM

AJ

“ We are deeply sorry for your loss ~ Simplicity Cremation & Funeral Services

-----  
**A Memorial Tree was planted for Francis James Smith, Jr.** - November 09, 2022 at 07:21 PM