



## John W. Jenrette, Jr.

May 19, 1936 - March 17, 2023

Murrells Inlet, S.C. Former Sixth District Democratic Congressman John Wilson Jenrette, Jr., 86, passed quietly on Friday, March 17th at St. Gabriel, an assisted living facility, where he had been a resident for the past two years. John was a charismatic, consequential and controversial political figure on the South Carolina and national stages.

Before becoming mired in controversy, he provided outsized representation to his beloved district stretching from the Grand Strand through the Pee Dee section of South Carolina. As early as the 1960s and 1970s, John saw the potential and laid the groundwork for this rural, underserved region to become one of the fastest growing places in the U.S. His colorful escapades and dramatic downfall obscured a common touch and dedicated public servant. "The 6th District was his heartbeat," said his wife Rosemary Jenrette.

He was born in Conway, S.C. in 1936 to John W. Jenrette and Mary Ellen Herring Jenrette of Loris, South Carolina. He was predeceased by his older sister, Opal Jenrette Robertson. John leaves behind his wife, Rosemary Long Jenrette. The couple married in 1992. He also is survived by two children, his daughter, Elizabeth (Ralph) of Myrtle Beach, S.C. and his son, former naval seaman Harold Hampton Jenrette most recently of Charleston, S.C. and his two beloved grandsons, to whom he was known as JPop, Tradd (Bennett) of Myrtle Beach and Beau (Abby) of New York City. As well as Rosemary's son,

Brooks Quickel and his children McCain and Grace.

John was married three times. His first wife, Sally Jordan Floyd, the mother of his children, is a classical pianist, respected piano teacher and realtor in the Tilghman Beach section of North Myrtle Beach. His flamboyant and controversial second wife, then Rita Carpenter, who was with him through much of his political and publicity woes, is now an Italian princess. John's final wife, Rosemary Long Jenrette, now of Conway, was a beloved Horry County school administrator and currently works as a well-known interior design consultant.

They shared an oceanfront house in Myrtle Beach and Palm City, FL. Rosemary provided a stable, nourishing final chapter to what had been a volatile life of meteoric rises and Icarus-like falls. The combination of Rosemary's enduring dedication and John's late-life equanimity, allowed him to finally create a stable life for himself.

In many ways, John was ahead of his time. He was an early progressive who saw the potential in people of all colors. Many of his Black staff members were astonished when he paid them the same as their White colleagues in the post-Jim Crow 1970s. An early congressional campaign ad set to the music of Bob Dylan's "The Times They Are A-Changin'," questioned the legitimacy of sending U.S. troops overseas without a formal declaration of war. His 1970s drug policy encouraged "harsh penalties for the pushers and education for the people."

The colorful antics of his personal life, deemed scandalous and career-ending in the 1970s, would likely be deemed normalized roguery in the fraught and divisive political landscape of the 21st century.

Despite a childhood of modest circumstances in Loris, S.C., John's family had

an impressive lineage that was tightly woven with early South Carolina history. The Jenrette Family are of French Huguenot decent, having arrived near Georgetown in 1777 on the ship carrying General Lafayette, a Frenchman who would go on to fight alongside George Washington in the Revolutionary War. John was proud of his family's history. He was a member of the French Huguenot Church in Charleston and even named one of his operating companies LeHuguenot, Inc.

Congressman James E. Clyburn, two-time House Majority Whip and the lone remaining Democrat in the South Carolina Congressional Delegation, observed that "John's humble beginnings in rural South Carolina filled him with a passion to help the powerless, and his outsized charm enabled him to enter the halls of power. His style and wit earned him a place in the colorful and sometimes controversial political history of South Carolina. I was fortunate to have him as a friend and confidant."

John was a first-class athlete in high school where he was a three star varsity athlete in 1954. He parlayed his prowess on the Loris football field into a partial scholarship at Wofford College in Spartanburg, S.C. After graduating from law school at the University of South Carolina in 1962, he founded an influential law firm in Ocean Drive, which soon became part of the newly formed City of North Myrtle Beach. John served on active duty as a U.S. Army officer and then served several years in the South Carolina National Guard.

He continued his work as a businessman, lawyer and city judge before being elected to the South Carolina State House of Representatives in 1964 as a Democrat. John represented the Horry County area from 1965-1972. During his time in Columbia, he served on the Local Government Committee and the powerful Ways & Means Committee.

The pivotal role that John played in the establishment of home rule for the District of Columbia is widely underappreciated. For much of the post-WWII period, southern segregationists maintained control of the city's budget and laws. Aided by support from the NAACP, John ran against Representative John McMillan, popularly known as Johnny Mac. McMillan, who chaired the committee overseeing the District, consistently refused to allow a vote on home rule out of committee for a full House vote, frequently drawing the ire of President Lyndon B. Johnson in the 1960s.

In a shocking upset in the 1972 Democratic 6th District primary, John defeated McMillan who had been the longest-serving Congressman in South Carolina history. McMillan petulantly blamed Black voters for his defeat, "The colored people were bought out." With McMillan defeated, Congress enacted the District of Columbia Home Rule Act on December 24, 1973. It was signed by President Richard Nixon.

The bruising primary and the 1972 Republican landslide, anchored at the top of the ticket by Richard Nixon, led to John's subsequent defeat by State Representative Edward Young of Florence in the general election. Undeterred, John ran again in 1974, and with President Nixon in the throes of the Watergate scandal, rode the Democratic wave into the House of Representatives.

The newly-elected Congressman John Jenrette was selected to join the House Majority leadership team as a Deputy Whip shortly after arriving in Washington in 1975, and he served on the Democratic leadership team as a Deputy Whip for all six years he served in Congress. He served first on the House Agriculture Committee and then on the prestigious House Appropriations Committee.

According to Doug Wendel, an early chief of staff, John's major

accomplishment was passing legislation to have the Federal Government recognize tourism as a major industry in the U.S. He helped establish the first Assistant Secretary of Tourism position in the Commerce Department. According to Wendel, who went on to become President and CEO of Burroughs and Chapin Company, the initial developers of Myrtle Beach, John's crowning achievement in tourism was establishing and becoming the first chairman of the United States Congressional Travel and Tourism Caucus. It immediately became the House's largest caucus.

John placed great emphasis on constituent service. He and his staff were widely recognized as the most responsive office the Sixth District had ever seen. He prided himself in assisting the average person in solving problems with the Federal Government, Veterans' Affairs or Social Security Departments. Among his many constituent services was securing federal funding for a high span bridge over the Sampit River in Georgetown, S.C., allowing sea-going vessels to travel upstream.

John was the first Member of Congress to endorse Jimmy Carter for President. Carter campaigned in South Carolina for John, and John campaigned for Carter in South Carolina and elsewhere, and persuaded a large number of congressional colleagues to support Carter during the nominating process.

When Jimmy Carter became the Democratic nominee in the summer of 1976, many believed that John was on course for a major position in the Democratic Party leadership-perhaps even Speaker of the House. But this was not to be. John was caught up in an initial bawdy scandal as it was reported that he and then wife, Rita, engaged in a much-publicized spontaneous liaison on the Capitol steps. Rita has since recanted the story, but the damage was done.

Soon a more serious cloud appeared on the horizon: John became embroiled

in the Abscam undercover FBI operation and was accused of accepting a \$50,000 bribe from an undercover agent posing as an Arab sheikh. After a lengthy trial, he was found guilty in October 1980 a few weeks before his Congressional election against Republican John Napier. That November he lost re-election by just a slim margin despite his conviction just days earlier.

"He had no campaign money, and he'd just been convicted three weeks before, but only lost by three percentage points. He was basically beloved by a large segment of the population (in his district)," said John Clark, a former staffer.

In later years, John would describe the period preceding his bribery charge as a very difficult personal time when he struggled with alcohol abuse. He maintained that he was under the influence at the time of his arrest. John was sentenced to two years in prison, of which he served 13 months.

In 1981 John and Rita separated and divorced later that same year.

Having re-centered his life on his beloved Grand Strand, John met and married Rosemary in 1992.

With government and legal work no longer an option, John drew on his considerable entrepreneurial instincts, embarking on a series of local and international business ventures.

In 2017, the book *Capitol Steps and Missteps: The Wild, Improbable Ride of Congressman John Jenrette* was published. While promoting the book, John described his years since Congress as including "marketing an experimental balloon-operated flotation device; running a national chain of timeshares; breeding horses in Bulgaria; and selling Phillip Morris cigarettes in Eastern

Europe immediately after the fall of the Soviet Union". He also imported wine from Hungary and antique furniture from Eastern Europe. John also became a developer of major coastal property in North Myrtle Beach.

As his friend Congressman Clyburn remarked toward the end of John's life, "John never stopped dreaming big."

There will be a service and burial on Friday, April 14 at 1pm at the French Huguenot Church 136 Church Street Charleston, S.C.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks that donations be made in John's memory to either Brookgreen Gardens in Murrells Inlet, [www.brookgreen.org/memorial-and-tribute-gifts](http://www.brookgreen.org/memorial-and-tribute-gifts) or The John W. Jenrette Jr. Endowment for Legislative Studies at Coastal Carolina University [www.coastal.edu/endowment/jenrette/](http://www.coastal.edu/endowment/jenrette/)

Please sign an online guestbook at [www.goldfinchfuneralhome.com](http://www.goldfinchfuneralhome.com)

Goldfinch Funeral Home, Conway Chapel is in charge of the arrangements.

# Cemetery Details

## French Huguenot Church Cemetery

136 Church Street  
Charleston , SC 29402

# Previous Events

## Service

APR 14. 1:00 PM (ET)

French Huguenot Church  
136 Church Street  
Charleston, SC 29401  
(843) 722-4385

# Tribute Wall



“ *Mr. Jenrette was much admired for many accomplishments, but I'm particularly proud of his work in reclaiming & restoring several historic homes in South Carolina. He was a unique individual.*

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**Louisa Tobias** - April 14, 2023 at 07:28 PM



“Hal, Elizabeth, Rosemary and families... With love, respect and prayers, we remember a life-long family friend who was also a Statesman and whose Congressional accomplishments continue to positively impact the State of South Carolina. There are too many memories to count and not enough words, but a few that come to mind are the many times we would travel together to the SC State Fair and to Galivants Ferry to cheer on John’s political campaigns at the “Stump” where Hal & Abby created mischief and memories and Elizabeth & Melanie created posters. We celebrated John’s continuous success and during one visit to DC, “Uncle Johnny” took young Abby’s hand and walked her down to his Congressional desk to cast a vote in his stead. This vote was recorded in the daily Congressional Record and, at that time, made Abby the youngest person to cast a vote on the House floor. Uncle Johnny and Abby would later reminisce about this and many other family memories during the many times they would meet at the old Holiday Inn to enjoy the music of General Johnson and the Chairman of the Board. The same Holiday Inn that the entire town of NMB stayed at during the snowstorm of 1977 where John was able to secure electricity but was still able to almost burn down the dining room with a lit candle! All of the kids were on the beach using kitchen trays as sleds for beach dune races, so the candle event might just be Urban Legend! Another professional exception that should be noted is that John was the first politician to not only seek but personally ask for the black vote. All politicians wanted this coveted slice of political backing but only Johnny went to the neighborhoods and knocked on their doors and asked how he could assist. By learning what was important to these families and friends, earned John the respect that brought invitations to share fellowship at previously unattainable Churches, picnics and playgrounds. John’s dedication and true friendship served him well during his political highs as his true friends and constituents celebrated his successes by his side and during the lows, as we continued to provide support to him and his family(s). The memories of John and “Aunt Sally’s” white colonial home are vivid. as are the smell of Sally’s perfume and the sounds of her playing the theme song from “The Sting” on one of her 2

*Baby Grands. Through the decades, our families shared smiles and tears and a friendly gathering or greeting at Hardwicks or Hoskins was never taken for granted nor were the annual Christmas Eve dinners shared together at Billy the Kids. A recent visit found John continent. A spirit that never seemed rested will forever be remembered and missed. John always made us proud and we were fortunate to call him a true friend. We will miss him. With gratitude and grace,*

*Wayne & Linda Sweatt, Abby Boylston and Family & Melanie Sweatt*

*(In loving memory: Jane, Michelle & Randy Sweatt)*

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**Abby Boylston** - April 13, 2023 at 07:01 PM



*Mr. Sweatt, It is so comforting and appreciated to read such a very memorable and vivid lifelong time and events that our community of early Ocean Drive N.M.B, SC families, adopted families, friends and neighbors All the experienced in the early 1960's, 70's, 80's, 90's into the new millennium Together!!!! Thank you Sir for You and your Family's Kindness, Concern, Compassion and Loyalty, Love and Support, Now and Always!!!!*  
*Sincerely, Hampton Jenrette*

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**Hal Jenrette** - June 03, 2023 at 08:52 PM

CV

*“ Oh Hal that is absolutely beautiful. Your Dad would love it and he would be so proud of you. So glad the three of us had our time together. His face would light up every time I mentioned your name. He loved you so much and we are just two of the many that will miss him. There will never be another John Jenrette! Cookie Miller VanSice*

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**Cookie Miller VanSice** - March 31, 2023 at 07:38 PM

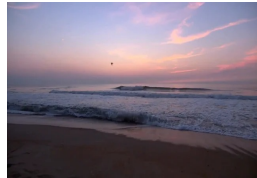


“ *With Permission, Respect, Honor, Forgiveness and Mercy:*

*Please Celebrate the Life of A  
Husband, Father, Son, Brother, Grandfather, Uncle, Cousin  
and Friend To Us All.*

*In Jesus Name  
Thank You,*

*The Jenrette's*



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**Hal Jenrette** - March 31, 2023 at 05:43 PM

JC

*Hal, thank you for posting such a moving tribute. I knew your father for 48 years, and I have known you for the same amount of time. Your father had many achievements and virtues which far outweigh the problems he encountered at times. You are a fine young man, and my thoughts and prayers are with you. With love and affection, John Clark*

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**John Clark** - March 31, 2023 at 06:24 PM

MT

*Hal, I'm grateful to have grown up around and listening to your dad . He taught me at an early age to advocate and stand up for those who can not do it for themselves. I probably never would have taken the journey I did had it not been for him and he was there to encourage me along the way. You gave him the most wonderful thing you could as a son, which was love and forgiveness and I will be forever honored to have been a part of your journey in forgiveness. I love you and your dad.*

*Mike Todd*

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**Mike Todd** - April 02, 2023 at 06:30 PM

CH

“ We express our profound sympathy to the Family of The. Hon. John W. Jenrette. Horry County, South Carolina and the USA is better because of the life and legacy of John. It was always a honor, privilege and pleasure to be in local and state political and other HorryCDP events with John. John, thank you for helping make our county, state and nation a beacon of hope for all. With Love, Prayers and Deepest Sympathy, Cedric, the Blain-Spain Family and HorryCDP State EC Team 🤝🙏🕯️🕯️

Cedric, the Blain-Spain Family and Horr - March 31, 2023 at 03:57 PM

HF

“ Helen Sasser Family lit a candle in memory of John W. Jenrette, Jr.



Helen Sasser Family - March 28, 2023 at 08:36 PM



“ Sentiments of Serenity Spray was purchased for the family of John W. Jenrette, Jr..



March 28, 2023 at 03:20 PM

DJ

“ John was my first boss and my friend. He did so much to help so many others, and taught me many valuable lessons about politics. He had so much charisma and truly loved serving the people. My sincere condolences to Rosemary, to Hal and Elizabeth, and to his many friends. There'll never be another one like John Jenrette!

Doug Jennings - March 28, 2023 at 03:07 PM

JF

“ John Carabo Family lit a candle in memory of John W. Jenrette, Jr.



John Carabo Family - March 26, 2023 at 02:32 PM

TP

“ Tammy Perkins lit a candle in memory of John W. Jenrette, Jr.



Tammy Perkins - March 26, 2023 at 02:31 PM

DM

“ I remember John well from his entry at Wofford College as a freshman when I was an upper classman. He joined Kappa Sigma fraternity of which I was a member. I followed his career with interest from my home in Florence. I ran into him on occasions in the Myrtle Beach area. I extend my sympathies to his family. I know you will miss him.

D.Laurence McIntosh - March 25, 2023 at 06:06 PM

RH

“ Rosemary, Elizabeth and Hal my love and prayers go to you in the loss of one so dear.. John was not only my Step Brother but a special friend . He was liked by everyone . Love and Blessings to each of you.

*Ruth Housand Holt*

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**Ruth Houeand Holt** - March 24, 2023 at 06:23 PM

JV

“ Our sincere condolences to all John's family. May you always hold dear to your hearts all his wonderful accomplishments. Let us never forget everyone has weaknesses and everyone has strengths. Rest In Peace !!!

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**Jimmy & JoAnn Vaught** - March 24, 2023 at 06:23 PM



“ Sentiments of Serenity Spray was purchased for the family of John W. Jenrette, Jr..



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March 23, 2023 at 08:29 AM

AD

“ Dear Rosemary and family,  
I'm so sorry for your loss. My thoughts and prayers will be with you all in the days ahead.

*Andy and Kim Johnson Dusenbury*

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**Andy and Kim Johnson Dusenbury** - March 22, 2023 at 10:44 PM

RP

“ John, I enjoyed the over 30 years we spent time together both in business and socially. Miss you my friend.

Ralph Porretti - March 22, 2023 at 08:33 PM

FT

“ RIP John.



Frank Titus - March 22, 2023 at 05:15 PM

PJ

“ Rosemary and Family. I pray God's grace, comfort, and peace upon and for each of you during this difficult time. Peggy Jones

peggy jones - March 22, 2023 at 11:42 AM

DC

“ Elizabeth, Hal and family, I am so sorry to hear of John's passing. My thoughts and prayers are with you.

Dee Adams Coleman - March 21, 2023 at 12:38 PM

DS

“ Rosemary, So sorry to hear of John's passing. Praying for you and all that loved John.

David Spires - March 20, 2023 at 07:37 PM

RH

*Dear Rosemary,, ELizabeth,and Hal I'm so Sorry to hear of John's passing. He was my step bother and dear friend. Prayers and love to all of you. May God bless you and love you in a very special way.. I would love to see you again. I am In the Heritage Home in Florence. I love you and pray for you during this very difficult time, Blessings and love each of you Ruth Housand*

**Ruth Houeand Holt** - March 22, 2023 at 07:37 PM



“*RoseMary, We are thinking very much of You during this time of sadness. So very sad for You during time of losing a Love One. You are in Our prayers.. With Love.. Dale and Kathy !*

**Dale Booth** - March 20, 2023 at 07:08 PM

GH

“*Gayle, Oliver and Ricky Horne purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of John W. Jenrette, Jr..*



**Gayle, Oliver and Ricky Horne** - March 20, 2023 at 02:53 PM

LG

“*So sorry to hear about John. Prayers for you Rosemary and family.*

**Lutricia Goodwin** - March 20, 2023 at 01:03 PM

ME

“*Dear Rosemary and Family, thoughts, prayers and love to you all during this sad time!*

**Mike Eddings** - March 20, 2023 at 12:23 PM

SR

“ *Rosemary and family*

*So sorry to hear of John's passing. We were classmates at Loris High School, graduated in 1954, and remained friends over the years. May God grant you His Peace and Comfort at this time and the days ahead.*

*Sylvia (Lee) Richardson*



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**Sylvia Richardson** - March 20, 2023 at 11:25 AM

JD

“ *John will always be remembered as a fellow neighbor who was a remarkable character and a caring person.*



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**John Dixon** - March 20, 2023 at 10:52 AM



*Hal, I am sorry for the loss of your father and hope you are doing well.*

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**Barry Wiseman** - March 20, 2023 at 06:07 PM

SS

“ *Sending my deepest condolences to your family. John was a friend to all.*

*Sandra Porter Strickland*

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**sandra PORTER strickland** - March 20, 2023 at 09:41 AM

DB

“ When my uncle passed away suddenly in 1969, Mr. Jenrette was able to bring his son home right out of the jungles of Vietnam. We were forever grateful. God bless his service to all the people of South Carolina.

Deborah Britton - March 20, 2023 at 08:49 AM

MK

“ Rosemary, so sorry to learn of your husband's passing, my condolences to you and your family

Mona King - March 19, 2023 at 09:28 PM

BC

“ I was a page for Mr. John in Washington. I great memories of my time there especially taking care of Hal. Mr. John was a good friend of my father when they served together in the SC House of Representatives. A great statesman and one who will be truly missed by all. Prayer to the family. Bob Coker

Bob Coker - March 19, 2023 at 08:34 PM

AA

“ John was a "True Southern Gentleman" and a good friend. He always cared for the people of SC and never forgot where he came from. Godspeed my friend and Thank You for your service. Al Allen Horry County Council

Al Allen - March 19, 2023 at 07:36 PM

DG

“ Thoughts and prayers go out to family and friends. He will be truly missed, but not forgotten. His memories will live on forever!

Dr Michael Graham - March 19, 2023 at 06:57 PM

SJ

“ John was a great friend! I hunted many times with him on Sandy Island ! We had a Campaign Party for him ! He lived with Tuck Rion during Law School ! I also flew him many times ! So sorry to hear !

Steve Jordan - March 19, 2023 at 06:12 PM

KA

“ Our sincere condolences for the loss of your loved one. May fond memories and earnest prayer bring comfort for family and friends at this time.  
Isaiah 41:13

Kathryn - March 19, 2023 at 05:13 PM



“ May you R.I.P. Mr. Jenrette. You were a long time family friend, starting with being my father's college roommate at Wofford to being his first Law Partner in NMB and the many years of family friendship to follow. I've enjoyed knowing you and following your career and adventures. All the best to your family, especially Elizabeth and Hal during this difficulty time.

Al Wheless - March 19, 2023 at 01:42 PM

KL

“ I can remember being in florence for a campaign . Miss you cuz kmh

Kristi Lawrimore - March 19, 2023 at 01:04 PM

KL

“ *Kristi Lawrimore lit a candle in memory of John W. Jenrette, Jr.*



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**Kristi Lawrimore** - March 19, 2023 at 01:02 PM

GT

“ *Dear Ms Rosemary, I am sincerely sorry for the loss of your husband. My late husband, Ronald Paul Todd of the Hickory Grove community thought highly of you and your husband. I extend my deepest condolences to all the family and friends. My children extend theirs also as they remember you fondly from the days you were their Principal at Myrtle Beach Primary School*

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**Gail Lilly Todd** - March 18, 2023 at 11:51 PM

DR

“ *My late dad graduated from Loris High with John and thought highly of him. Sending his family and friends my sincere condolences.*

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**DR** - March 18, 2023 at 09:26 PM

MH

“ *Dear Rosemary, Elizabeth, Ralph, Hal and Johnny's grandsons, please accept my sincere condolences in the loss of your husband, dad and grandfather. Johnny was such a great friend for so many years and his friendship will be greatly missed. When he served in Congress, he was a most effective Representative for the 6th Congressional District. RIP, Johnny. There was no one quite like you.*

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**Mikey Hough** - March 18, 2023 at 04:00 PM

RG

“ Condolences to each and everyone of you. The Goings Family.

Rose Goings - March 18, 2023 at 03:08 PM

PT

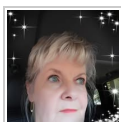
“ Elizabeth and Hal,  
I am so very sorry to learn of your loss. Your daddy was a friend to so many and was .over by all who knew him. I feel sure he is visiting with so many old friends gone before. Please know I will be thinking of you as you face the void he leaves.  
Pam Heustess McLauchlin

Pamela M Thompson - March 18, 2023 at 01:28 PM

ET

“ He represented my father probably 50 years ago on some land transactions in Myrtle Beach. We became neighbors probably 23 years ago but he and I formed a very nice relationship over the past 10 years. On numerous occasions would realize my son was in town and when come and check to see if himor his friends needed anything. He was definitely an original and always fun to just talk to and hear some stories he would tell.

Emory Thompson - March 18, 2023 at 01:24 PM



John was a indeed a man that loved his state, county and hometown. He indeed stood behind his word. My Dad, Floyd Benton,

Button Boyd - March 21, 2023 at 08:07 PM