



Dr. Joel Ellis Philhours

Dr. Joel Ellis Philhours, beloved husband, father, and grandfather, retired professor, lifelong volunteer, and most humble man you may ever meet, died May 16 at UAB Hospital in Birmingham. He was 83 years old; the cause of death was aortic dissection with cardiac tamponade.

Joel was born in 1941, the third of four children of Carl and Imogene Philhours, and raised in Hornersville, Missouri on a cotton farm. He met his future wife of 62 years, Susy Merrick, in study hall, and they married in 1961. Joel went on to college at the Missouri School of Mines and Metallurgy and then earned his first PhD, in physics, at Kansas State University. He was a professor at the University of Kentucky when he decided to study for a second PhD, in accounting, and then taught accounting at Western Kentucky University. With Susy, a schoolteacher, Joel raised their daughter Joelle in Bowling Green, Kentucky.

Joel and Susy retired and moved to Birmingham to be closer to their daughter Joelle and son-in-law John Hamilton and helped raise three granddaughters, Anne Merrick, McKinley, and Ellie. Now mostly called "Poppy," Joel became baby nurse, playmate, nanny, carpooler, tutor, and mentor to his granddaughters as well as many of their friends and neighbors. Poppy and Susy also welcomed into their home in Birmingham the Karabukayeva-Keneskhanov family (Yerlan, Aizhan, and Eileen) as well as many other guests and travelers.

In addition to supporting his family and friends, Poppy was deeply involved in community service organizations for many years. He rebuilt homes with Baptist Brotherhood Disaster Relief, tutored and mentored students at Central Park School, answered calls for the Suicide Hotline, assisted retired

neighbors with their taxes through AARP Tax Relief (who else does taxes for fun?), welcomed new Birmingham residents with the Newcomers Club, played bridge at and cooked countless meals for the Birmingham Bridge Club, worshipped and served at the Church of Brook Hills, tutored high schoolers for the ACT, and mowed lawns for “the elderly” even into his eighties. This short list represents only a small part of Joel’s countless acts of kindness toward family, friends, and strangers, many of which we are just finding out.

Joel was a brilliant mathematician and a lifelong learner with endless curiosity about people and the world around him. His humility and devotion to serving his family, his community, and God was an inspiration for all who were lucky enough to know him.

He is survived by his wife, Susy Merrick Philhours; his daughter, Joelle Philhours Hamilton; son-in-law John Hamilton; granddaughters Anne Merrick Hamilton Dunnan (Bowen Dunnan), McKinley Hamilton, and Ellis Hamilton; a host of nieces, nephews, cousins (and spouses); dear friends (to name a few) Lyle and Tiny, Srdan Budimir, Van Green, Aizhan Karabukayeva, Yerlan and Eileen Keneshnakov, Jeff Gurosky, Mrs. Pat, Mr. Ed and his tax friends, Chris J, Chris R, Marshall, and too many to name.

He is preceded in death by his parents, his siblings and in-laws, and his dear friend Will Gurosky.

The family would like to thank Dr. Sullivan, Dr. Cobia and team at Grandview, Dr. Sasha Still and team at UAB, Leigh and Dan, Heath, Mollie, cousins Tony and Susan, nephew Chris, the Dunnans, Chris, Abby, Donie and Neal, dear PEO sisters, bridge friends, Brook Hills Church, and all who supported and cared for us as Joel would have - selflessly.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests memorials be made to The Church at Brook Hills , 3145 Brook Highland Parkway, Hoover, AL 35242.