



## James Pinckney Wightman

May 14, 1935 - November 20, 2023

James Pinckney Wightman, 88, of Blacksburg, Virginia, died peacefully at Roanoke Memorial Hospital on November 20, 2023.

Jim was born in Ashland, Virginia on May 14th, 1935 to Helen and William Arthur Wightman. Jim attended public school in both Ashland and Petersburg before beginning post baccalaureate studies at Randolph Macon College. It was during this time that Jim met Juanita, the love of his life, and they were married on June 16th, 1956 in Petersburg. Jim and Juanita were married 63 years, with Juanita passing away in December 2018.

Jim furthered his education by obtaining his Master of Science and Doctor of Philosophy degrees in chemistry at Lehigh University. After completing a two-year post-doctorate at Pennsylvania State University, Jim was hired in 1962 as a new faculty member in the chemistry department at Virginia Tech, where he taught courses, guided masters and doctoral-level students, as well as conducted research in the field of adhesive science for 42 years. Among numerous awards for his commitment made to teaching and research, Jim received the Alumni Distinguished Professor Award for excellence in teaching.

Jim led an active life. Jim was a member of Blacksburg United Methodist Church, devoted his time and energy to the church. He adored the Christmas season – set up the Wightman family's 100+ year old miniature Christmas

scene, handed out candy canes to strangers while sporting a Santa hat, a holiday-inspired suit, and blinking bowtie. Jim was dedicated to various groups affiliated with Virginia Tech and the broader community such as Sports Club, Torch Club, and volunteered for outreach and engagement initiatives through the Virginia Tech Alumni Association. Jim traveled extensively, often going out of his way to stop and visit with friends and family, even if it was for only 10 minutes. He especially loved his time at the cabin on the Mobjack which reminded him of his childhood at Coles Point on the Potomac River.

He is preceded in death by his wife and parents, as well as his brother William Wightman and sisters Jane Howard and Betty Trump.

Jim is survived by his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. Left to cherish his memory are his daughter, Debbie Woods (Rickey) and granddaughter Tanya Ingram (Tommy) and great-grandchildren Laurana and Korbin Tiberius; daughter, Sharon Wightman; son, Bill Wightman (Meg), grandchildren Liam and Alice; son, Jim Wightman, granddaughter Kendal and her mother Becky Wightman. In addition, Jim is survived by a sister-in-law Lorene Perry (Tom), and as well as beloved nieces and cousins.

Family was everything for Jim. He would go out of his way to visit, and loved providing fun educational experiences and activities - whether it was sharing with them all the joys that the Chesapeake Bay offered (boating, fishing, crabbing, tubing, blueberry picking) or serving as a guest chemistry lecturer at his grandkids' daycare, elementary or middle schools, including experiments with helium and other gasses, putting out a fire with earwax, making "elephant toothpaste" and the favorite, liquid nitrogen ice cream.

Jim constantly expressed to his family that he had had a good run. He loved life, he enjoyed meeting strangers and friends alike and was constantly on the go. We will be hard pressed to keep up with his legacy.

A planned visitation will take place on Thursday, November 30th from 4:00-7:00 p.m. at McCoy Funeral Home in Blacksburg. The funeral will take place on Friday, December 1st at 1:00 p.m. at Blacksburg United Methodist Church.

In lieu of flowers, please consider donating to the “James P. Wightman Scholarship Fund” at Virginia Tech. Checks can be made out to this scholarship and sent to: ATTN: Gift Accounting, 902 Prices Fork Road, Blacksburg, VA 24060 or online [[www.give.vt.edu](http://www.give.vt.edu)]

# Previous Events

## Visitation

NOV **30**. 4:00 PM - 7:00 PM (ET)

McCoy Funeral Home  
150 Country Club Dr. S.W.  
Blacksburg, VA 24060  
(540) 552-3211  
mccoyfuneralhome@verizon.net  
<https://mccoyfuneralhome.com>

## Funeral Service

DEC **1**. 1:00 PM (ET)

Blacksburg United Methodist Church  
111 Church St SE, Blacksburg, VA 24060

# Tribute Wall

LK

“ I’m sorry to hear that Prof. Wightman passed away. He was my chem professor at VT and one of the best professors I had there. I still tell stories about his classes and I am 43. In my wallet I carry a small periodic table of the elements card that he gave me right before I graduated when we met in west end randomly and sat down for lunch together to catch up. Condolences to his family- may his memory be a blessing to you.

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**Lauren Kuta** - October 26, 2024 at 07:30 PM

PW

“ Dr. Wightman attended Bellamy UMC in Gloucester during the summers, and always had a periodic table business card to give. When I went to Tech and got a summer internship, he and Juanita let me move in to their house for the summer. I would not have been able to stay in Blacksburg without them. While he always reminded me that chemistry would be a better path than entomology, I find myself missing him greatly as I finish up my PhD in Entomology. I miss you, Dr. Wightman, even if I never did like minestrone soup.

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**Pat Wooden** - March 07, 2024 at 08:56 PM

JL

“ I first met Dr. Wightman, I think it was in 1963 or 64, when I took his undergraduate Advanced Physical Chemistry Course. I was hooked. He remained a good friend and stayed in touch off and on over the years. At an alumni banquet a few years ago, at which he was the speaker, my wife and I had a wonderful dinner conversation with him. I was surprised when at the beginning of his talk he said that I was the only person to take every course he taught, graduate and under graduate, and I was a Chemical Engineer not a chemistry major. The knowledge he imparted and his ways of thinking have been a vital part of me throughout the years. We had plans to get together but they were interrupted by the recent pandemic. I was hoping to renew those plans when I learned today of his passing. I will think of him often.

Jack Litz 31Jan2024

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Jack Litz - January 31, 2024 at 09:01 PM

JC

“ I had many professors while an undergraduate student at Virginia Tech. The majority I do not remember. Dr. Wightman, however, will always remain one of my favorite teachers. With his kindness, patience, and sense of humor, he made every one of his students feel welcome in his class or office hours—chemistry major or not. His cheerful attitude and smile were infectious and even though I struggled with chemistry, I always looked forward to his class. Dr. Wightman was a wonderful man and all who knew him are better for having known him.

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Jason Crosby - January 24, 2024 at 09:40 AM

ES

“ Friendship and professional interactions going back many years created delightful experiences given by the wonderful personality of Jim. What a beautiful legacy.  
Erol and Teresa Sancaktar

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**Erol Sancaktar** - December 13, 2023 at 06:46 PM

MM

“ Dr. Wightman was my favorite professor during my time at Virginia Tech. He was kind, and thoughtful to all his students. Ready at all times to help a student in need. Always with a funny joke and an outstretched hand to shake. I think of him to this day as what a role model should be. I strive for it but will never match his aptitude to make everyone around him smile and feel at ease. What a great and warm man Dr. Wightman was. My condolences to the family and to the Virginia Tech Chemistry family that was lucky enough to have met him and sit through an always entertaining lecture.  
Michael Meadows MD



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**michael meadows** - December 08, 2023 at 07:52 AM

KT

“ I am truly saddened to hear of Doc's passing. I was a graduate student of his in 1983-84. And when I got married, Doc and Mrs Wightman came to our wedding from their cabin and smoke pouring out of the car's tailpipe. He always laughed about that whenever I talked to him. What an inspiration and caring person he was. Thoughts are with the family during this difficult time. Kimberly Newcomb Tisa

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**Kim Tisa** - December 07, 2023 at 08:04 AM

BA

“ I knew Jim via our common interest in glue. He was a chemist and I did mechanics. May I share two of many lasting memories

*I saw him perform a scientific party trick in which he doused a dish containing a flaming liquid [flames several inches high] by using his own earwax. He explained that it was all to do with surfactants.*

*I was always curious about the P in his name. He said that it stood for Pinkney which had something to do with his ancestors who came to America with the Duke of Beaufort. There is a town called Beaufort on the N Carolina coast, founded in 1713. And guess what, there is a village named Pinckney just a few miles from the Duke's estate in south Gloucestershire in England. I shared this info with him some years ago and sent him an Ordnance Survey map to support my point.*

*I also taught him how to drive a punt on the river in Cambridge.*

*Bob Adams*

*Oxford, England*

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**Bob Adams** - December 06, 2023 at 10:38 AM

HH

“ Our Titusville folks are deeply saddened by the loss of such a wonderful man. We all loved him and shall miss him greatly. Our sincerest condolences to all of his family. Hudson, Claire, Bruce, Greg, Bonnie, Derek, Drew and Alisha.

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**Hudson Haile** - December 02, 2023 at 11:41 AM

HH

“ *What a loss. Bev (Beverly Stone Haile) and I always looked forward to a visit from Jim. We loved the guy and always had such fun talking about the Stone family and growing up in Ashland. He was a rare intellect and greatly admired and loved by all of our family. I'm sure he is happy to be reunited with his beloved Juanita. We visited him one year in Blacksburg and he took us on campus where it was obvious how much he had connected with his students. I was surprised how many ran up to him to give him a hug and say how much they missed him.(He had just retired.) It seemed like a dozen flocked around him saying they wished he were back. I considered him a brother and I shall miss him greatly. Hudson Haile*

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**Hudson Haile** - December 01, 2023 at 08:20 PM

KP

“ *There are people you encounter in your life who change its course for the better and you remember forever. Dr. Wightman holds that place in my life and my heart. His encouragement and support of me as a young scientist to progress in my education was pivotal. But perhaps most important is how kind, funny, and caring he was towards everyone.*



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**Katherine Phillips** - December 01, 2023 at 05:46 AM



“ *Full Of Love Bouquet was purchased for the family of James Pinckney Wightman.*



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November 30, 2023 at 08:15 PM



“ Days of Sunshine Bouquet was purchased for the family of James Pinckney Wightman.



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November 30, 2023 at 07:28 PM



“ We lived in Westover Hills near the Wightmans Jim and his wife were always very nice to us as kids. My wife Kim got to know him thru the cleaners she worked at and when he came in to drop off he had a smile on his face. She loved to see him. You will be missed but know your with your loving wife again.



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**DAVID & KIM BOHLIN** - November 30, 2023 at 05:19 PM



“ I knew Professor Wightman as "Bill's Dad", who loved his family, friends, students, colleagues, and total strangers by welcoming us into his joyful life. His legacy of teaching through kindness and dedication is an inspiring gift to the VA Tech community and to the world. May we all carry his kindness forward.

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**Kathy Schwartz** - November 30, 2023 at 08:52 AM

GH

“ I was a young student of Dr Wightman’s in the early ‘70’s. He was a terrific teacher. He gave me a job, offered perspectives, opened his home and wonderful family to me. Such a caring and uplifting human being. Such a well rounded individual. Fifty years later I still cherish the memories and feel blessed to have known him. May God bless him and his family. Gail Hendley

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**Gail Hendley** - November 29, 2023 at 11:22 PM

JC

“ I was a student of Doc’s, as we affectionately called him, from 1989-1994, and my experience in his research group greatly exceeded my expectations of what graduate school would be like. I had intended to just get my M.S. and call it a day, but I was having so much fun that I decided to continue for my Ph.D. Those were some of the best years of my life.

*In the Acknowledgements section of my dissertation, I wrote:  
"Doc has always made research exciting and fun with his own irrepressible enthusiasm for science. I can honestly say that I have learned much from him, not only about adhesion, but also about how to enjoy life." I'll always remember how he tried to talk me into an academic career, because "there is just no better job in the world!"*

*The world is now missing a bright light and an amazing human being. We'll miss you Doc, may you rest in eternal peace.*

*Blessings,  
Joannie Chin*

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**Joannie Chin** - November 29, 2023 at 07:57 PM



“ Joyful Memory was purchased for the family of James Pinckney Wightman.



November 29, 2023 at 06:56 PM



“ Dave & Mary Cullen purchased the Country Basket Blooms for the family of James Pinckney Wightman.



**Dave & Mary Cullen** - November 29, 2023 at 01:58 PM



“ Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of James Pinckney Wightman.



November 28, 2023 at 10:53 PM



“ Jim and Tolin Jen purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of James Pinckney Wightman.



**Jim and Tolin Jen** - November 28, 2023 at 04:15 PM

CC

“ I always smile when I think of Jim and Juanita. He was my MYF leader at Wesley Methodist Church in Bethlehem, Pa. when he was at Lehigh. (from which I later graduated.) He was a great Sunday School teacher and we went on many trips and hikes together. We stayed in touch over the years and shared a lot of fun and laughs. They were a "merry" couple and my consolation is that they are together again. My wife and I will miss him greatly. Rest in peace dear old friend! Charles and Christine Clemens

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**charles whitfield clemens** - November 28, 2023 at 01:04 PM

EC

“ I first met Jim Wightman in 1962 when my family moved to Blacksburg. He was my Sunday School teacher and MYF leader. He was always approachable and always positive. I saw him on and off during the years since. He was best friends with my parents Rufus and Charlotte Beamer and later on with my Aunt Cerrie Coil. The last time I saw him he came to my mother's memorial service to console me with his presence and caring words. He loved and was loved and will be greatly missed. -Elizabeth Beamer Craig

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**Elizabeth Craig** - November 28, 2023 at 11:43 AM

SH

“ *Dr. Jim Wightman was the quintessential gentleman. My wife Tammy dearly loved the man, and after meeting JP, I fully understood her respect and admiration.*

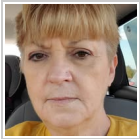
*I vividly recall an engagement with JP, on the walk, in front of Davidson Hall, many moons ago. I removed my hat, shook his hand, and we talked. JP then asked why I removed my hat. I was oblivious that I had removed the lid. I recall telling him it was out of respect. I feel JP was not the type of gentleman that asked for admiration or esteem. If you met the man, it was impossible not to hold him in the highest regard.*

*I wish his family and the plethora of his associates and friends the best. Dr. Wightman will be missed.*

*Stephen Hiner*

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**stephen hiner** - November 28, 2023 at 10:47 AM



“ *Dr. Whiteman and I became good friends during the 19 years that I worked with the group at Virginia Tech. I miss the long conversations we had over the years, as well as fond memories of our group field trips! My thoughts and prayers to his family. He will be forever in our hearts!!*



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**Tammy Hiner** - November 28, 2023 at 10:16 AM

AG

“ *Alldredge, Kanagy & Gaver purchased the Love's Journey for the family of James Pinckney Wightman.*



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**Alldredge, Kanagy & Gaver** - November 28, 2023 at 09:47 AM

TF

“ *Tammy Jo and the Hiner family purchased the Emerald Garden Basket for the family of James Pinckney Wightman.*



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**Tammy Jo and the Hiner family** - November 28, 2023 at 09:30 AM

MC

“ *Jim will be missed by many. He was always seeking ways to touch others. He volunteered on several occasions to visit my 5th grade classroom and conduct various chemistry experiments with my students. They loved him. They loved the way he taught them about chemistry. Jim also volunteered to participate in BUMC's living nativity, no matter the weather. He always came wheeling into the parking lot at BUMC for his shift with a lighted Christmas tree in the back of his truck. Jim never met a stranger and he was an ambassador to the study of chemistry. I remember him greeting people in church and handing them a small card with the periodic table on it. What a guy he was!! He truly had a life well-lived. Love you, Dr. Jim Wightman  
MaryAnn and Steve Cass*

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**MaryAnn Cass** - November 26, 2023 at 04:26 PM

RS

“ 1 file added to the album Jim Wightman ... everyone's friend



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**Richard Skaare** - November 26, 2023 at 11:22 AM

RS

“ Jim was a wonderfully peculiar man: brilliant yet folksy, articulate with academics and chatty with farmers and kids, focused on the now while thinking five steps ahead, a person of deep faith who refused group-think, a person rich in accomplishments and even richer in humility. He was the kind of guy I trusted and loved as a dear friend. I will miss you, Jim, but I'll see you before long.

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**Richard Skaare** - November 26, 2023 at 12:20 AM

WJ

“ I'll greatly miss Jim. Every interaction I had with him was enjoyable and rewarding.

*Bill Starnes (DCAC Charter Member)*

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**William H Starnes Jr** - November 25, 2023 at 12:43 AM

CS

“ Heaven gained a true angel when Mr. Wightman was called home! Mr. & Mrs. Wightman were the most thoughtful and loving people and I truly feel honored by experiencing this first hand! My thoughts and prayers are with this precious family! I know you all are sad but know that your parents are happy to be together again! Hugs & Prayers!

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**Carolyn Smith** - November 24, 2023 at 06:28 PM



“ *Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of James Pinckney Wightman.*



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November 24, 2023 at 10:06 AM



“ *I will miss that genuine and generous smile. He always felt like a good friend. My sympathy to Sharon, Jim and all of the family. Kathy Dumas Angel*

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**Kathy Dumas Angel** - November 23, 2023 at 07:02 PM



“ *No better human ever walked on this earth*

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**bill coleman** - November 23, 2023 at 04:20 PM



“ *One of the most meaningful highlights of my career at Virginia Tech was my interaction with Jim Wightman. Jim was a great friend, colleague, and inspiration for all who knew him! R. I. P. George Simmons*

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**George Simmons** - November 23, 2023 at 02:32 PM



“ *What an amazing couple - Jim and Juanita Wightman! Now they are together forever - sharing happiness and smiles to everyone's hearts. Truly they exemplified love to the world❤️! Susan and George Simmons*

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**George Simmons** - November 23, 2023 at 02:22 PM

AN

“ *Such a wonderful person, professor, mentor and lover of life. You will be missed.*

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**Ann Norris** - November 23, 2023 at 08:29 AM

RW

“ *RICK AND JUDY CMIEL WILLIAMSBURG purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of James Pinckney Wightman.*



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**RICK AND JUDY CMIEL WILLIAMSBURG** - November 22, 2023 at 08:50 PM

KL

“ *My sincerest condolences to Debbie & family. You will be in my prayers.*

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**Karen Link** - November 22, 2023 at 08:49 PM