



Walter Dunnington Shields Jr.

July 18, 1947 - January 12, 2023

Walter Dunnington Shields, Jr. (“Watt”), 75, of Christiansburg, Virginia, passed away on January 12, 2023, after a valiant fight for life following a stem cell transplant in 2019 to conquer Acute Myeloid Leukemia.

Watt was born on July 18, 1947, to Walter Dunnington Shields, Sr., and Ann Kingdon Shields in Bluefield, West Virginia. After graduating from Christchurch School, he attended and graduated from Marshall University.

A lifelong lover of science, Watt achieved his Doctor of Dental Science at the Medical College of Virginia in 1974. He was commissioned as Captain in the United States Army and retired as Colonel in 1994. He completed a master’s degree at George Washington University and completed his residency in periodontology in 1981. During his military service, he was awarded the Legion of Merit, the Order of Military Medical Merit, the Surgeon General’s Specialty Designator, and three Meritorious Service Medals. He loved teaching and served as an instructor in Army dental residency programs.

Watt established his periodontology practice in Blacksburg, Virginia in 1994. Even in private practice, he thrived on learning and continuously sought to master the latest innovations in his field, even completing advanced training in Sweden. Watt led the New River Valley study club for area dentists for 14 years to discuss the latest in dental research from around the world. He also

led an informal cabal of local dentists at one of his favorite restaurants, The Cellar, where topics could include anything except dentistry. He was a former President of the Virginia Society of Periodontists. One of his proudest achievements was serving as a mentor in the Virginia Tech Pre-Dental Society, where he helped launch the careers of numerous future dentists.

Watt's academic papers were published in the Journal of Periodontology, the Journal of the American Dental Association, and the Journal of the U.S. Army Medical Department. A meticulous scientific data collector and researcher to the end, Watt was actively collaborating up until the time of his death with colleagues at the Medical University of South Carolina College of Dental Medicine on a paper based on more than 20 years of his clinical findings.

Watt met his future wife, Tandy Tully Shields, at Marshall University in 1969. They both moved to Richmond, Virginia in 1970 where Tandy launched her career in communications and supported Watt as he completed dental school. They married on August 14, 1971, and after he was commissioned, they traveled around the world to eight different military assignments with their three children. Watt's favorite assignments were their six years in Germany, where he particularly enjoyed "Volksmarches", 10 to 20-kilometer organized hikes through the countryside with leisurely stops for beer and bratwursts and an oompah band at the end.

Watt retired in 2018 and enjoyed hiking and biking around the New River Valley, especially on the Huckleberry Trail where he sponsored a bench. He loved escorting Tandy to the latest showings at the Lyric and was proud to sponsor a seat at the theater. A lifelong cinephile, Watt and his son, John, had weekly boy's nights out and they never missed a new movie. He enjoyed visiting his daughters in Northern Virginia and seeing his five grandchildren. Watt loved hosting his extended family at Flat Top Lake in West Virginia and captaining them on his pontoon boat. He loved traveling and some of his

favorite recent trips included a tour of Prague with his three children to celebrate his 70th birthday and visiting the Grand Canyon last year where he rode a burro around the rim.

Anyone who knew Watt would say he was full of life and enjoyed making people laugh. He had a joke for every dental patient and loved sharing funny memories. After his AML diagnosis in April 2019, he spent months at the University of Virginia Hospital where he regaled his doctors and nurses with entertaining stories even as he fought a very aggressive leukemia. He was thrilled that his sister, Ann Shields Stone, was a match and she donated stem cells to save his life in July 2019. He always said that was the greatest gift anyone could have given him. Her donation gave Watt three and a half more years of life to make more memories with his family and friends.

Predeceased by his parents, Watt is survived by his wife of 51 years, Tandy, and his three children, Maurine Tully Shields Fanguy, Elizabeth Dunnington Shields Murphy (Robert), and John Kingdon Shields. He also leaves behind five grandchildren, Julia Fanguy, John "Jack" Fanguy, James "Emmett" Murphy, Maeve Murphy, and Kathleen "Kate" Murphy. He is also survived by his sister, Ann Shields Stone (Jerry), and his brother, Edward Southard Shields.

Services will be held at McCoy Funeral Home, 150 Country Club Drive in Blacksburg, Virginia on Saturday, January 21, 2023. Visitation is at 1:00 pm and the funeral service is at 2:00 pm with the Reverend Douglas Kanney officiating. A reception will be held after the service at The Village Center, 2387 Warm Hearth Drive in Blacksburg. Later this year, he will be laid to rest at Arlington National Cemetery with full military honors.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests blood or platelet donations through the

Red Cross or contributions to a local Habitat for Humanity chapter.

Cemetery Details

Arlington National Cemetery

Arlington, VA

Previous Events

Visitation

JAN 21. 1:00 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

JAN 21. 2:00 PM (ET)

McCoy Funeral Home Chapel
150 Country Club Dr S.W.
Blacksburg, VA 24060

Tribute Wall

GS

“ We extend our caring thoughts to the Shields Family. Walt was a friend to all who knew him, especially the students at Virginia Tech who wanted to pursue dentistry as a career. He devoted much time to these students, inviting them to come to his practice and his providing them valuable advice as how to accomplish their goals. He will be missed by all who knew him, especially his students. His presence will always remain in their lives.

George and Susan Simmons

George Simmons - January 21, 2023 at 08:51 AM

MS

Tandy, Maurine, Elizabeth and John, Jim and I send to you are heartfelt sympathy in the passing of Watt. He was a special and talented gentleman. I remember your kindness in taking us to dinner when we first arrived in Blacksburg and in finding out that we had been backdoor neighbors when Jim was in Medical school and Watt was in Dental School and that our boys knew both of your girls. What a small world it can be. Our prayers and thoughts are with you at this difficult time. Maria and Jim.

Maria Stone - January 21, 2023 at 05:42 PM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Walter Dunnington Shields Jr..



January 20, 2023 at 06:00 PM

ML

“ *Dr. Shields was simply the best professional I have ever experienced in any medical capacity. My condolences to the family and farewell to such a wonderful human being.*

Mary L - January 20, 2023 at 09:40 AM



“ *Lovely One Spathiphyllum Plant was purchased for the family of Walter Dunnington Shields Jr..*



January 18, 2023 at 08:34 PM

DK

“ *In the years that I new Watt, both as a patient and as a friend, he was one of the most kind and gentle people I have ever known! We shared some good times together at the Greek Festival, Tech ball games, and just eating pizza and drinking beer and "talking." It was in those simple and easy times that I got to know Watt, his early years, his practice, his military time, and just what was important to him in life. He was the most caring person and so sensitive to the feelings and lives of others, not just as a surgeon and dentist, but as one who genuinely cared for the well-being of other people. I am grateful for our times together. May God comfort all of you his family and give you good and pleasant memories of sharing life with your husband and father! Watt was a joy and blessing in my life, and I thank God for him!*

Doug Kanney - January 18, 2023 at 05:02 PM

CE

“ I am so sorry to hear about the passing of Watt. Such a very special person. May God bless and comfort each of you during this very difficult time. I will be praying for each of you. Cherish all the wonderful memories that he left for each of you. God Bless.

Charlotte Epperley - January 17, 2023 at 08:44 PM

RM

“ My thoughts and prayers are with the Shields family! Dr. Shields was such a sweet soul, and I have such good memories of him, and also being in School with John, and having Ann as a Sp Ed aide my freshman year. May the family find comfort during this hard time.

Robert Metz - January 17, 2023 at 02:33 PM