



## James (Jay) Rufus Graham Jr.

September 24, 1961 - February 15, 2026

James (Jay) Rufus Graham, Jr., passed away at his home on February 15, 2026, at the age of 64. Born September 24, 1961, Jay was a retired farmer who dedicated his life to his craft and his family.

Jay is preceded in death by his parents Jim and Yvonne Graham, brother John Graham and brother-in-law Bolling Brawley. He is survived by his wife Courtney Dunn Graham and children including Lucas Graham (Jaymie) - Newport, TN; Austin Graham (Meredith) - Knoxville, TN; Will Woods - St. Petersburg, FL; and Bella Woods Mathis (Isaac) - Destin, FL. His grandchildren are Hayden, Harper, and Easton (Lucas) and Stella and Ava (Austin). All of JayPaw's grandchildren were simply the light of his life as he loved attending birthday parties, athletic contests, and any opportunity to celebrate them.

He is also survived by sisters Julie Graham Walker - Sweetwater, TN; Elizabeth Graham Parker - Woodbury, TN; and Nancy Graham Brawley. His sisters-in-laws include Lindsay Dunn McNabb (Steve) - Newport, TN; Lucy Dunn Hooper (Ben W. Hooper III) - Newport, TN; Rachel Dunn (Johnny) - Newport, TN; brother-in-law Boe Dunn (Margot) - Knoxville, TN; mother-in-law, Mary (NaNa) Dunn and father-in-law, Clyde (Scutter) Dunn. He is finally survived by a great multitude of nieces and nephews.

From little league to his college years, sports were a cornerstone of Jay's life. After a standout high school career that culminated in a quarterfinal playoff appearance his senior season, Jay went on to play collegiate baseball at ETSU and Walters State. As an adult he poured that same love for baseball and football back into his community. Whether he was coaching at City Park, helping launch the Middle School football program, or assisting the CCHS Baseball team, Jay was a constant fixture on the sidelines, sharing his knowledge and passion with countless young athletes.

Beginning in the early 1980s, Jay operated Graham Farms alongside his father growing corn, soybeans, and wheat. This grain farming operation earned national recognition with top ranked corn yields numerous years, including in 2015 when their test plots recorded the highest recorded yields in the state of Tennessee. Additionally, Jay and his father owned and operated Tri-State Tractor and Turf, a John Deere dealership in Greeneville, TN during the early 1990s.

A lifelong animal lover, Jay's dogs were his constant shadows. Whether it was his beloved Black Labrador, Butch, or his more recent English and French Bulldogs and Bernedoodles, each was a cherished member of the household. Jay's passion for the outdoors was equally matched by his skill as a hunter. He spent countless seasons pursuing duck, deer, and turkey—trips made all the more meaningful because they were shared with his boys, Luke and Austin.

Jay was a beloved community member. He was a lifelong member of First United Methodist Church. On Friday nights you could see him at Larry Williams Stadium cheering on the Fighting Cocks. He often expressed his care for others through delicious Southern cooking. His family and friends consider those who had the fortune of trying his cheesecake or BBQ as incredibly lucky. His memory will certainly be carried on at the dinner and

desert tables.

The family will receive friends Friday, February 20th, 2026 from 4:00-6:00 P.M. in the Sanctuary of the First United Methodist Church, Newport, TN. A Celebration of Life service will immediately follow at 6:00 P.M.

Memorials can be made to either of the following organizations Jay supported. Jay's family expresses their sincere gratitude in advance.

1. First United Methodist General Fund, 212 Washington Avenue, Newport, TN 37821; or
2. Cocke County Football Letterman Club, 175 Brookstone Road, Parrottsville, TN 37843

# Previous Events

## Receiving Friends

FEB **20**. 4:00 PM - 6:00 PM (ET)

First United Methodist Church  
212 Washington Ave  
Newport, TN 37821

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## Celebration of Life

FEB **20**. 6:00 PM (ET)

First United Methodist Church  
212 Washington Avenue  
Newport, TN

# Tribute Wall

MW

“ *I'm so sorry to hear about Jay. Prayers for the family.*

**Marcie Wilds-Shaffer** - February 22 at 12:21 PM



“ *A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of James (Jay) Rufus Graham Jr..*

February 22 at 11:00 AM

KL

“ *Glad to have been able to play baseball with him and against him during our younger years. RIP. ol friend*

**Keith Large** - February 21 at 10:00 AM

TB

“ *Great memories of Jay through the years .. prayers for peace and comfort to all of his family during this sad time*

*Sincere condolences*

*Tammy Presnell Binkley*

**Tammy Binkley** - February 20 at 11:06 PM



CB

“ *With heartfelt condolences to all the families.*

**Connie & Marsha Ball** - February 20 at 09:44 PM

AB

“ Praying for God to provide strength and comfort for Jay’s family.

Amy Ball - February 20 at 09:44 PM

RR

“ Courtney and family, I'm so very sorry to hear about Jay. May God give y'all comfort during this very difficult time. Lots of prayers for all of you 🙏❤️

Rhonda Rice - February 20 at 07:13 PM

SM

“ Sending prayers to all of the Graham family.

Stacy Munn - February 20 at 05:15 PM

KF

“ Kacic and Doyle families purchased the Divine Peace Bouquet for the family of James (Jay) Rufus Graham Jr..



Kacic and Doyle families - February 20 at 11:52 AM

DB

“ David and Catherine Buckner purchased the Lily and Rose Tribute Spray for the family of James (Jay) Rufus Graham Jr..



David and Catherine Buckner - February 20 at 11:44 AM

DB

“ David and Catherine Buckner planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of James (Jay) Rufus Graham Jr..

David and Catherine Buckner - February 20 at 11:44 AM



“ Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of James (Jay) Rufus Graham Jr..



February 20 at 11:21 AM

AC

“ Sorry to hear about Jay. Enjoyed playing ball with him back in the day. Y'all will be in our thoughts and prayers.

Andy Chrisman - February 20 at 09:07 AM



“ Sweetest Sunrise Bouquet was purchased for the family of James (Jay) Rufus Graham Jr..



February 20 at 08:54 AM

DM

“ Rest in peace my friend...

Debbie Murr McGaha - February 19 at 07:38 PM

JK

“ We are sorry to read of Jay’s passing. Our condolence and prayers to all of the Graham family. Lots of memories from 4H, Farm activities and mutual friends.  
Terry and Janey Kinser

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**Janey Clevenger Kinser** - February 19 at 03:55 PM

TR

“ I am so sorry for your loss. Jay was such a nice person. I will be praying for all of the family. Terri James Runyan

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**terri Runyan** - February 19 at 03:19 PM

RH

“ Courtney, and family i am so sorry for your loss. You all are in my thoughts and prayers. Love Rhonda Rhea.

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**RHONDA** - February 18 at 04:42 PM

CV

“ I'm so sorry for your loss. Praying for the family.

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**Cindy Valentine** - February 18 at 12:08 PM

CI

“ Sending lots of Prayers for the family.  
With deepest sympathies  
Cindy Wise and family

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**cindy** - February 18 at 10:29 AM

SB

“ Lucas and family,

*So very sorry to hear of the passing of your dad. Sending prayers during this difficult time.*

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**Susan Ball** - February 18 at 09:07 AM

BE

“ Courtney, Bella, Will, and Nancy,

*We are praying for you and your family during this difficult time. May God bring peace and comfort in your time of need.*

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**Benjamin Evans** - February 18 at 08:28 AM

SC

“ So sorry for your loss. Thoughts and prayers are with you. May God bring peace and comfort to your family.

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**Skip and Sheryl Clevenger** - February 18 at 07:54 AM

ST

“ Sorry to the family for your loss.

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**Steven and Loretta Taylor** - February 18 at 06:47 AM

GS

“ Courtney and family so sorry for your loss I enjoyed seeing him at church. Prayers for your family during this difficult time. Gail Samples

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**Gail Samples** - February 17 at 10:15 PM

JJ

“ I met Jay through Chip, my college roommate. We became friends fast because of the laughter and shenanigans we both had in common. I'm so sorry for your loss. He was a great person, and praying for you all.

Jim Young, Jr - February 17 at 10:01 PM

CC

“ Prayers of comfort and peace for the family during this difficult time.

Craig Chrisman - February 17 at 09:59 PM

MA

“ Marian Anderson lit a candle in memory of James (Jay) Graham



Marian Anderson - February 17 at 08:20 PM

LH

“ Prayers!



Louise & Jimmy Hux - February 17 at 07:54 PM

DK

“ *Debbie & Herbie Keller lit a candle in memory of James (Jay) Graham*



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**Debbie & Herbie Keller** - February 17 at 06:28 PM

SV

“ *So sorry to hear this sad news. We have wonderful memories of Jay and all the "Graham clan" from the good ol' days. We have all of you in our hearts during this painful time. Sam and Mary Ann Venable, Knoxville*

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**Sam Venable** - February 17 at 06:09 PM

BD

“ *My heart is certainly broken for all of you in the Graham family. In church with all of you for many years and I love all of you, and your loved ones that have already gone home. I'm so glad I got to see Jay at the Christmas Eve service this past Christmas. I patted his arm as if to say, "So good to see you", because I hadn't seen him in quite awhile, and he smiled at me so sweetly. RIP Jay, you were loved! Sending my prayers and love to all Jay's loved ones, and may God bring you the peace that transcends all understanding, be with you now and forever.*



*Matthew 5:4*

*With Love,  
Linda Dawson*

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**Bud & Linda Dawson** - February 17 at 05:51 PM

PS

“ Prayers for the family, so sorry for your loss.

Peggy Stephenson - February 17 at 04:31 PM

DC

“ Courtney and Family:  
We are so very, very sorry for your loss. Please know that many prayers and much love are coming your way from Charleston. We pray for angels to walk beside you in the coming days.

Duay, Kay, Amber and Connor - February 17 at 03:36 PM

TL

“ So sorry for your loss, Courtney. I remember Jay most during baseball season when I was a member of the Smokey mountain little league. Garry went to school with Jay. Prayers

The Lewis family

Tileah Lewis - February 17 at 03:34 PM

TF

“ May God's loving presence comfort you, His perfect peace restore you, and His promise of eternal life sustain you during this difficult time.

With Heartfelt Deepest Sympathy,  
Jabo & Tammy Francis

Tammy Francis - February 17 at 03:00 PM