



Hugh Richard White

August 25, 1944 - August 26, 2023

After a progressive decline in his health over this past year, Hugh Richard White passed away peacefully on August 26th, one day after his 79th birthday. Hugh was born in Washington, DC in 1944 to Richard Weiss White and Elizabeth “Betty” White (Weart). He grew up in neighboring Arlington, Virginia, but always considered DC his home. He attended Calvary Baptist Church in Washington through college years, and is actually still on the membership rolls. He had perfect attendance at Sunday school in his elementary years, but in high school he and his good friend, Joe, used to cut out of the Sunday classes and see how far they could hitchhike before getting back in time for Sunday dinner. He had an incredible recall of the politics and politicians of the 1950s and 60s. He got a chance to live history in August of 1963 when he was on the Mall for Martin Luther King’s March on Washington. He went back to DC in 2013 to celebrate the event’s 50th anniversary. Hugh joined the Navy Reserve at age 17, did his basic training at Great Lakes Naval Training Center, and then went through Officer Candidate School in Rhode Island after his graduation from Purdue University. Between OCS and reporting to his first ship, Hugh was doing training in Vallejo, California, north of San Francisco. That is when he met Liz Busch, who was teaching in Palo Alto, south of San Francisco. During the week, they would meet in the middle for dinner and walks through the beautiful city. Liz and Hugh were married in April 1968, just before Hugh left for the Western Pacific and Viet Nam. Hugh’s active duty was in the USS Canberra and in the USS Monticello until 1971.

When he was released from the Navy (“for the first time”) he and Liz moved to Corvallis for what was going to be two years while he went to Oregon State for a Master of Oceanography degree. He changed course along the way and graduated with an MBA. And the two years became fifty-two years.

After his MBA degree, Hugh went to work for Merritt Truax Oil Company in Salem. That is when he started managing and purchasing real estate, first with partners from the company and then on his own. At the same time, Hugh continued to stay active in the Navy Reserves. In 1980 he returned to active duty with the Reserve Readiness Command in San Diego. He followed that with seven years back in Washington, DC, on active duty at the Naval Annex near the Pentagon. And then on a reserve ship out of Long Beach, California. All the while on this active duty he still “commuted” to Corvallis where Liz and their daughter, Sarah, stayed for school. Hugh retired from the Navy Reserves (a second time) in 1992 achieving the rank of Captain.

After returning, downtown Corvallis became the center of his attention. He owned the building occupied by J.C. Penney and they had just given notice that they were moving to Heritage Mall. What do you do with an empty department store? Hugh found anchor tenants in a young and growing Starbucks Coffee Company and Einstein’s Bagels. Then he divided the rest of the building into smaller spaces and filled them with small independent business and services. He continued that format with other buildings, believing in keeping a varied and thriving downtown Corvallis.

Hugh was not an artist himself, but he loved art and truly admired people that had artistic talent. He never missed visiting an art museum in any city he visited. In Corvallis he created several studio spaces in his buildings. He showcased work from local artists. He offered the alley wall of the Madison Square for “Wings” - one of the first downtown murals. And then, on a vacant lot that sat just south of the Saturday Farmers Market, he started a weekly Artisan’s Faire, where local artists and crafts people could display and sell their work.

Hugh had many varied interests, He was a fan of sports, travel, music, and old

movies. He could sing along with Elvis, Bobby Daren, or songs from Broadway musicals. He could quote lines from classic 1930's and 40's movies, especially anything with Humphrey Bogart. He was a lifelong St. Louis Cardinals fan and was in St. Louis for three Cardinals World Series appearances. And a favorite memory is attending Washington Redskins football games with his father. He went to three Redskin Super Bowls. He kept all his detailed score books from OSU Beaver Baseball games, both at Goss and at the College World Series games in Omaha.

As his hat pins attested, he enjoyed traveling to many varied locations. He made it to five of the seven continents. He visited Southeast Asia, Australia, Continental Europe, the Balkans, Great Britian, South and Central America. But traveling in the US was still his favorite. He visited all 50 states, all of the National Parks, and uncountable National and Historic Monuments. The road was never straight as he zig-zagged off the route to see landmarks or places of interest "nearby". If you told him where you were from, he could name the highway that went through your town, and any nearby river, lake, beach, mountain or local landmark. It's no surprise that his favorite book was the Rand McNally Road Atlas.

Hugh leaves his wife, Elizabeth (Liz), his daughter Sarah Laudig (Robert), and sisters Diane Doyle and Gretchen White. There will be a "Celebration of Hugh" on Monday, September 18th from 4:00 – 6:30 at the Corvallis Courtyard by Marriott, 400 SW 1st Street. People are invited to drop in and share a memory. If you would like to honor Hugh's memory with a donation, we ask that you consider a gift to the historic Whiteside Theater, www.whitesidetheater.org.

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

SEP **18**. 4:00 PM - 6:30 PM (PT)

Courtyard by Marriott Hotel
400 SW 1st St
Corvallis, OR 97333

Friends and family are welcome to drop in, please come by when you can!

Tribute Wall

CI

“ Just got word that Hugh passed away. Liz am so sorry for your loss. I remember when I was in Starbucks with my daughter or a friend, Hugh would reach in his pocket and pull out a piece of chocolate. With a smile he would say here, to my sweet and wonderful ladies. Thank you Liz for sharing your husband over the years.

Cindy - April 01, 2024 at 10:01 AM

CI

“ Cindy sent a virtual gift in memory of Hugh White



Cindy - April 01, 2024 at 09:54 AM

RB

“ Mr. White was a great friend of over 20 years and a mentor to me. I met him hanging out at Starbucks at the building he owned and we'd often talk about city politics, baseball, and many other topics. He also gave me a job and helped me grow up. Though I moved from Oregon in 2004, when I'd come back to visit, we'd go to a Knights game together or have lunch at one of his many tenants' stores. I miss him. - Richard Bergstrom

Richard Bergstrom - December 03, 2023 at 10:50 PM

LW

“ Liz, I only met Hugh once, but I know the enormity of your loss. If there is anything I can do to help you, in any way, please let me know. Lola Work

lola work - September 05, 2023 at 05:24 PM

KB

“ Elizabeth and Hugh were very kind to me and my wife over many years. I met Hugh by accident when I was looking for a small spot to locate my voicemail service in Corvallis. That blossomed into various joint partnerships from real estate to expansion of my voicemail service business. He always treated me with respect and was enthusiastic about what I was doing. We are sorry to hear of his passing and wish Elizabeth and Sarah our condolences, rest in peace my old friend.

Kevin and Maureen Brooks

kevin brooks - September 02, 2023 at 04:03 AM

SE

“ Hugh was a very sweet man and every time I encountered him he was kind and offered me candy. He will be missed. He was a true staple of Corvallis to me.

Stephanie Edwards - August 28, 2023 at 09:21 PM