



## Harold James Wells

August 6, 1936 - December 12, 2013

A Son's (Malcolm Wells) tribute to his Father.

Harold James Wells, activist, political junkie and friend of many died on Thursday, December 12, 2013. Harold was born in 1936 in Russell, Arkansas, smack dab in the middle of the great depression, which explains both his lifelong inordinate love of pot luck dinners and his inability to ever throw anything away. Ever.

Harold loved the opera, symphony, ballet, and all manner of plays. More often than not he would wake both of his young boys to the sounds of WOI public radio FM, blaring the likes of Puccini, Carmen and Bach. A true dream come true for grade school aged boys. He was not all highbrow and college-educated however, and had a wonderfully eclectic record collection, where the likes of Isaac Hays, Simon and Garfunkel, and Elmore James all waited patiently for the curious and prying fingers of his young boys.

Who knows what drives people to become themselves. Perhaps it was Harold's intimate familiarity with the cruelty of others. Cruelty fostered in the dark recesses of intolerance and insecurity. Perhaps, it was his kind soul. Whatever it was, it led to a lifetime of helping others. It led to a lifetime of protests, demonstrations, marches, and counseling. He was tireless. He marched for civil rights in Arkansas in the 1960s; he marched on Washington in the 1970s for the ERA. In the 1980s, he fought for peace with STAR\*PAC

and finally he fought for equality for all, regardless of sexual orientation.

In 1976, Harold opened the Thoreau center, a community center where like-minded people could congregate, people from across the aisle could debate, and everyone could let down their hair and have a good time. For four decades there have been weddings, birthday parties, political functions, French Club meetings, poetry readings, gypsy jazz shows, and old fashion house parties too numerous to count.

Over the last 77 years Harold has been a campus minister, teacher, politico, sexologist, rape counselor, rabble-rouser, raconteur, and dreadful cook. He rarely paid a bill on time and punctuality remained an absolute stranger to him until the very end.

Harold was preceded in death by his father Alton Wells, his mother Esta Wells--who was salt of the earth, a wizard with fried chicken, mashed potatoes, and gum drop cake--and without a doubt, the best hugger and baby holder ever. He was also preceded by his sister Frances Walker who was as radiant and warm as the sun itself.

He is survived by his three wonderful and beautiful sisters: the lovely Kathryn McKee (LaVerne) who was the only one that could ever get his toupee to truly look right, Lola Blanton (Jerry) whose kindness and devotion know no bounds, and Linda Harbour (Calvin) whose smile always sparkles and whose laughter remains infectious to this day. He is also survived by his brother Carroll Wells, the diamond in the rough, cantankerous, black sheep who, like a fine Bourbon, has mellowed just right.

Finally he is survived by his two sons Malcolm (Janel) and Gregory Wells, to whom he has given the love of music, the arts, sports, and most of all the gift of an open mind and the ability and desire to question the man, though at

times he has regretted that last gift. Harold also has four wonderful, riotously spirited grandchildren who are as talented as they are diverse, Matthew, Kathryn, and Cassandra Wells (children of Gregory), and Riley Wells (son of Malcolm and Janel).

There will be a Celebration gathering on Sunday, December 29th at the Russell Methodist Church 2-4 p.m. Please join us and rejoice, pray, commiserate and laugh together. Harold would have liked that. Service is by the Rev. Treva Mills at 2:00 PM.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be directed in Harold's name to the Russell Methodist Church, (where his heart was led to the ministry), PO Box 152, Russell, AR 72139.