



R. Knolan Benfield

May 17, 1941 - July 11, 2024

R. Knolan Benfield, 83, of Morganton, NC, passed away on Thursday, July 11, 2024. He was born May 17, 1941, in Georgia, to the late Rufus Knolan Benfield, Sr. and Emma M. Hartsell Benfield. In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his former spouse, Gale Benfield.

After spending eight years as a traveling photo-journalist with the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, he and his wife returned home to Hickory, NC and opened The Benfield Touch photography which they operated for the next 13 years. Knolan's articles and photography were published in over 30 publications, including a regular column in Blue Ridge Country magazine.

Knolan enjoyed camping and traveling all over the United States with his family. He had a real love of nature, photography and wildlife. He was able to share his love of travel and nature during the five years he spent as a tour director traveling all over the United States.

Knolan is survived by his daughter, Therese Benfield LaValley (Brent); sister, Bonita Leary (David); nephew, Stanley Leary (Dorie Griggs); and nieces, Emma Kramer (Ira) and Hannah Poe (Greg). Knolan leaves a legacy of love, mentorship, and inspiration.

A memorial service will be held at 2 p.m. Sunday, August 11 in the Chapel at First Baptist Church in Morganton with Rev. Thomas Bland officiating.

In lieu of flower memorial contributions may be made to Friends of the Smokies

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<https://friendsofthesmokies.org/make-a-gift/>

Sossoman Funeral Home and Crematory Center is assisting the family with the arrangements.

Tribute Wall



I met Knolan forty-nine years ago when he hired me at the BHMB. He inspired me and was instrumental in launching my career as a photojournalist. Knolan was always supportive of me especially once when I needed help with a personal crisis. His critique of my work inspired me to work harder to achieve a higher level of professionalism. I enjoyed re-connecting with him and will forever fondly remember our days at the BHMB. May he rest in peace. My condolences to his family, colleagues and friends.

—W.A.Bridges Jr.