



Ralph "Rick" Dillard Bennett, Jr.

May 15, 1952 - June 5, 2019

Ralph Dillard "Rick" Bennett Jr., long-time Proprietor of Bennett Galleries & Co. passed away at his home in Knoxville on June 5, 2019. Rick was 67. With his passing, Knoxville has lost one the region's most creative and visionary advocates for world class arts and design.

Rick was born in Davidson County, TN on May 15, 1952. He graduated from UT Knoxville in 1975, after one year at another SEC school whose name he long refused to speak. That school, Ole Miss, would later become his younger son's alma mater. Rick was a gifted athlete, excelling in basketball and tennis well into his adult years, but it was golf that became his favorite sport. As his good friend, Ed Winter, fondly reminisced, "Rick approached golf like an art. He would practice more than play, and his chipping and putting green in backyard said it all. He was always working on his swing, like a sculptor on clay. Nobody loved our golf trips to Ireland more than Rick. And, no one gave us more laughs, and could laugh at himself at the same time, better than Rick." Rick also loved attending UT sporting events and live concerts, especially Boz Scaggs.

Of course, the ultimate love of Rick's life, beyond his sons, family and friends, was his gallery, and his resulting lifetime immersion in the creative arts. Rick always had an eye for things of aesthetic beauty, particularly original fine art and handmade crafts. When grouped by him in the showroom or a client's home, Rick created magic that made people smile in awe. He opened his first custom framing shop on Kingston Pike in 1976, expanding into a larger space in Western Plaza in 1987. However, it was his and Jeannie's bold move in 1996, to acquire the former Capri Cinema, which anchored the retail corridor of local proprietors that would become, The District in Bearden. That move, propelled Bennett Galleries & Co. to its status as one of the premier destinations for art and design in the Southeast.

Jeannie and Rick traveled the world, especially enjoying Italy and France, in search of fine European furnishings that would bowl over their most discerning customers. In recent years, these trips included their sons as they joined the family business. Rick was a true

champion of American artists, extolling the virtues of pieces created by local artists who would go on to wide acclaim, including Richard Jolley, Tommie Rush, Andrew Saftel and Carl Sublett. Rick always welcomed every customer with a smile, and often a hug, and his customers eagerly looked forward to bargain hunting at his “Rick’s Gone Crazy Again” annual sale. He also used the setting of the gallery to host countless benefits for local non-profit arts and community organizations, including KMA, Community School of the Arts, and Urban League, among many others. Rick retired from Bennett Galleries & Co. in 2017.

Rick was a beloved father, grandfather, uncle, friend, golfing buddy, business partner, and community servant who is going to be greatly missed. He was preceded in death by his parents, Ralph Dillard Bennett and Bess Hunt Bennett. Rick is survived by his sons, Lee Maxwell Ross Bennett and Stephen Warren Reece (Aelise); brother, William Randall Bennett (Kristine); grandchildren, Stephen Warren Reece III, James Franklin Goodson Reece, and Edwin Bennett Reece; nephew, Myles Bennett of Brooklyn, NY; ex-wife and friend, Jeannie Bennett; special friends Lori McKelvy, Joe Costner, Frank Gambuzza, Robert Shipley, Jim & Jeanne Scott, Ron & Connie Hutchins, Bob Sowell and so many more.

A celebration of Rick’s life will be held later this summer for family and friends. A scholarship fund in Rick’s name has been created at the Community School of the Arts. Tax deductible contributions may be made to Community School of the Arts, 900 Henley Street, Knoxville TN, 37902, attn: Jennifer Willard, or online at csaknox.org. Thank you to Rose Mortuary for its assistance, and to all who read this, Rick would simply say, ‘I love ya’. Knoxville will always love and never forget you, Rick.

Online condolences may be extended at www.rosemortuary.com

Comments



“ to all Rick's Family and Friends our thoughts and prayers are with you!

Max and Jeannie we so much remember all the school events, birthday parties, ballgames, etc.. in those wonderful Webb School years!

So enjoyed the few rounds of golf I got to share with Rick and the conversations about families and his Gallery trips, etc..

Terry, Dawn, Connor, Austin and Paige

Terry - June 19, 2019 at 12:49 PM



“ My deepest sympathy to Rick's family and friends!

Brenda McNew - June 14, 2019 at 10:41 PM