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James Breckinridge Speed

Fort Smith, AR, 1934 - 2015



James Breckinridge "Breck" Speed, 81, of Fort Smith, passed away peacefully in his home on December 24, 2015. He was a community and business leader in Arkansas for over fifty years. Born January 3, 1934, in Davenport, Iowa to Lloyd Jeter and Marion Whitbread Speed, Breck was raised in Louisville, Kentucky with his brother John and sister Sue. Breck attended the Lawrenceville School in Princeton, New Jersey and earned a scholarship to attend Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut, where he was an active member of the Skull and Bones society.

Breck showed a love of flying at an early age and worked at Central American Air Service at Louisville's Bowman Field. He earned his pilot's license when he was 17 and enjoyed flying and piloting a sailplane for many years. While at Yale, Breck headed the Yale Broadcasting Corporation, which enabled him to meet

and interview architect Frank Lloyd Wright. This meeting sparked Breck's interest in architecture and inspired him to commission E. Fay Jones, an intern for Frank Lloyd Wright and professor of architecture at the University of Arkansas, to design his Fort Smith home, where he lived for over 50 years.

Following his graduation from Yale, Breck married Marilyn June Young in 1956 and had sons Breck, Robert, and John. He began his career at the Louisville Cement Company and, after two years, was persuaded to work for Marilyn's father, R.A. Young, at Arkansas Best Freight System. Breck started at ABF as a director of terminals, then became Vice President of Terminals and eventually President of ABF Systems in 1967. He served in leadership positions at ABF for more than 20 years.

With Marilyn's death in 1978, Breck left ABF to pursue a venture in the oil and gas industry before

returning to the trucking business in 1989, when he and his partners bought USA Truck. In 1981, he married Carolyn Whittaker, and in 1987 Breck and Carolyn had daughter Frances Alexander. Breck served as chairman of the board for USA Truck from 1989 to 2000, when he retired. He remained active on the board until 2012. Breck swam daily for exercise until the end of his life. He enjoyed tending to his many generations of English Bulldogs and spending evenings sipping a well-aged

Kentucky bourbon.

Over his career, Breck served in several trucking industry positions, including V.P. at-large of the American Trucking Association and a member of the executive committee of the American Trucking Association. He also served on the Board of Transportation at Northwestern University, and as a Lawrenceville School Trustee. Breck also helped fund the Oren Harris Chair of Transportation at the University of Arkansas for many years. Locally, he was on the boards at Sparks Regional Medical Center, the Girls Club of Fort Smith, City National Bank, the Old Fort Museum, and as a Chairman of the United Way of Fort Smith. Breck was also interested in politics, serving as a delegate to the 1964 and 1968 Democratic National Conventions.

Breck was preceded in death by his parents, his first wife, Marilyn June Young, and his nephew, Robert A. Young IV. He is survived by his wife of 34 years, Carolyn Speed; his brother, John Sackett Speed and sister, Sue Speed of Louisville, Kentucky; his brother-in-law, Robert and wife Mary Carleton Young, and sister-in-law, Janie Whittaker Vermillion; his sons, Breck and wife Anne of Little Rock, Ark., Robert and wife Donna of Rogers, Ark., John and wife Holly of Little Rock, Ark.; and his daughter Frances Alexander Speed of Dallas, Texas; his grandchildren Collins Pugh, Lucy Whiteside, Marilyn Speed, James Indy Speed, Ridge Speed, and Carolyn Elise Speed; and two great-grandchildren, Frances and Henry Pugh.

Visitation will be Wednesday, December 30th from 5-7 p.m. at Hardscrabble Country Club. Memorial Service will be held Thursday, December 31st at 11 a.m. at St. John's Episcopal Church. Services and cremation are under the direction of Edwards Funeral Home.

Breck's family would like to thank the many nurses and aides who have cared for him this year.

Memorials may be made to: Sebastian County Humane Society, 3800 Kelley Highway, Fort Smith, Ark. 72904. Online condolences may be sent to www.edwardsfuneralhome.com.

Published December 30, 2015

OBITUARY SUBMITTED BY:

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