



James J. O'Brien

August 10, 1935 - September 20, 2016

James J. O'Brien, 81, of Tallahassee, died peacefully on Tuesday, September 20, 2016 at Tallahassee Memorial Hospital from complications following open heart surgery. The husband of Kae Ingram O'Brien, he was Professor Emeritus of Meteorology/Physical Oceanography in the Department of Earth, Ocean and Atmospheric Science at Florida State University (FSU).

Mr. O'Brien was born in the Bronx, New York City, New York, August 10, 1935, the oldest of nine children of the late Maurice J. O'Brien and Beatrice Cuddihy O'Brien. He was very proud of his Irish heritage being born a first-generation American after his parents (who literally met on the ship) immigrated to New York City in 1928. He enjoyed listening to and singing Irish songs, reading about Irish history and culture, and especially reconnecting with his Irish cousins and telling Irish jokes.

He traveled all of his life, frequently to pursue his scientific interests. In his seven years of marriage with Kae, they were able to go on a number of fun and exciting trips around the world, including European river cruises and a January 2016 cruise to Antarctica where they were able to walk on the ice fields and view whales, seals and penguins.

He loved bass fishing with friends and family, playing bridge, and spending time with his family, especially his eight grandchildren. He was also forever the

“big brother” who, as one brother stated, “...opened the door and showed us the path...” to strike out on our own to create, and live, a good life.

Dr. James J. O'Brien, the Robert O. Lawton Professor of Meteorology and Oceanography, founded the Center for Ocean-Atmospheric Prediction Studies at FSU. He served as a weather officer in the U.S. Air Force from 1958 to 1960, promoted to the rank of Captain. He took advantage of the Air Force's financial assistance and training to earn both his Masters (1964) and Ph.D. (1966) degrees in Meteorology at Texas A&M University. He is internationally known for mentoring young scientists, and under his guidance, 44 students completed their Ph. D. degree and over 80 students completed their M.S. degree. He was particularly proud of his success in dramatically increasing the number of women scientists in oceanography and meteorology. Once nicknamed “Dr. El Niño”, he was a pioneer in using early supercomputers to model atmospheric and oceanic interactions which led to new breakthroughs in understanding and prediction of coastal upwelling, El Niño, La Niña, and hurricane effects on the ocean. Dr. O'Brien retired in December 2006 after 38 years at Florida State.

In addition to his wife, he is survived by three children, Karen of Oregon, Kevin (Diane) of Virginia, and Denis (Allison) of Oregon; four grandchildren, Christopher, Katie, Brennan and Molly; two stepdaughters Jessica (Kirby) Johnston of New Jersey and Monica (Tom) Olsen of Tallahassee and four step grandchildren, Chase, Tina, Maria and Michael. He is also survived by seven of his eight siblings, Margaret, Theresa, Michael, Vincent, Mary, Patricia and Catherine. He will also be missed by many brothers-in-law, sisters-in-law, nephews, nieces, and numerous friends and colleagues.

His parents, his first wife Sheila O'Keefe O'Brien (1935-2004), his son Sean, daughter Dealyn, and his brother John preceded him in death.

A Funeral Mass will be celebrated at 11:00 AM on Monday, October 3, 2016 at Good Shepherd Catholic Church, 4665 Thomasville Road, Tallahassee, FL 32309 followed by a reception in the church hall. Jim's desire was to have his remains cremated and then spread in the southern Pacific Ocean, so there will be no graveside service. The family will host a "Celebration of life (an Irish wake) for James O'Brien" from 4:00 PM to 7:00 PM on Sunday, October 2nd for family and close friends at the family home.

Kelly Barber of Bevis Funeral Home, 2710 North Monroe St., Tallahassee, FL 32303, (850) 385-2193, www.bevisfh.com , is assisting the O'Brien family with their arrangements.

Previous Events

Funeral Mass

OCT 3. 11:00 AM (ET)

Good Shepherd Catholic Church
4665 Thomasville Rd.
Tallahassee, FL 32309

Reception

OCT 3. 12:00 PM (ET)

Good Shepherd Catholic Church
4665 Thomasville Rd.
Tallahassee, FL 32309

Tribute Wall



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of James J. O'Brien.*



October 02, 2016 at 04:46 PM



“ *Ryan Maue purchased the Lovely One Spathiphyllum Plant for the family of James J. O'Brien.*



Ryan Maue - October 02, 2016 at 03:08 PM



“ *Kevin. Sending condolences to you and your family on the loss of your father. What a life well lived! Frances Sobel Michels*

Frances Michels - September 30, 2016 at 01:40 PM



“ *John Klinck and Eileen Hofmann purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of James J. O'Brien.*



John Klinck and Eileen Hofmann - September 29, 2016 at 09:26 PM



“ *Love's Journey was purchased for the family of James J. O'Brien.*



September 29, 2016 at 05:27 PM



“ *Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of James J. O'Brien.*



September 28, 2016 at 01:15 PM



“ *Sending most sincere expressions of sympathy to Kae Diane Basile O'Brien and family in the loss of Jim. Respectfully, Marilyn Stein Underhill*

Marilyn Stein Underhill - September 24, 2016 at 08:56 AM