



Mr. Frederick LeRoy Williams

August 5, 1943 - January 19, 2021

Fred Williams passed away peacefully on January 19, 2021, after a long battle with cancer and recent complications from COVID-19.

He was a warrior until the end. Fred grew up in Kansas and was a proud alumnus of Kansas State University; however, Columbia, South Carolina, was considered home. Fred loved to travel and had a passion for volunteering and charity work throughout the community. He never met a stranger and dedicated thousands of selfless service hours with his trademark smile. He genuinely engaged with every person he met, asking thoughtful questions and making you feel like the most important person in the room. Fred was preceded in death by his parents, Herman and Thelma Williams; sister, Patricia Zargar, and brother, Roland Williams.

He leaves behind many friends and family that loved and cared for him dearly. As he often liked to say, "Make it a Great Day and Keep Smiling".

An inurnment will take place in Manhattan, Kansas. Arrangements for a celebration of life will be announced at later date by Shives Funeral Home, Trenholm Road Chapel, 7600 Trenholm Road Ext., Columbia, SC.

Comments



“ One constant, year after year, whatever the venue: a warm and personal welcome from Fred. I'll miss that, and I'll miss him.

Ted Glasser - March 12 at 09:24 PM



“ Fred was a truly wonderful person who impacted the lives of all who attended AEJMC. I first met Fred as a graduate student, trying to figure out what AEJMC was all about. He was a guide, a resource, and friend from that time forward. He will truly be missed by all. David S. Allen, professor, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

David S. Allen - March 11 at 09:28 AM



“ Fred was just a good person with a good heart. He was always friendly and kept a smile on his face. I volunteered with Fred at many events. He seemed so knowledgeable. Fred will definitely be missed in the Midlands of SC.

Garry Baum - January 27 at 11:25 AM



“ Working with someone is one thing, but sharing life with someone is something totally different. Fred we shared life together and all of the emotions that come with it. I love the memories and I love you for them. When I am missing you the most, I will remember your big smile and your Zoro wit to comfort me and I will always remember and cherish you for bringing me into the AEJMC family. Rest well dear friend and know that we are all better people for knowing you.

~Felicia Greenlee Brown

Felicia Brown - January 26 at 07:32 PM



“ Fred was always the first to come and greet me at almost every civic event, concert, or at a restaurant. I'm so sad that the world has lost such a positive, loving, and kind person. Each Philharmonic Concert that I performed, Fred would always wish me luck with a cliché "Break a Leg" When I would attend any philanthropic event, Fred would be greeting and helping to keep the flow going. St. Patrick's Day celebrations, May Fest, and Ball games will not be the same without Fred's smiling face and cheerful greetings. Heaven has gained a wonderful angel!
Cheers to my friend Fred Williams!
Dave Allison

David Allison - January 26 at 02:36 PM



“ What a great loss for so many of us who loved him. We met at the YMCA. His unique and wonderful way of immediately making you his friend was his true gift. He was my friend and I will miss him.

Kathy Riley

Kathy Riley - January 25 at 12:04 PM



“ Fred and I met when we both volunteered for the Columbia Action Council. This was in a previous century and a previous millenium (sp). The last time I saw him was at the Richland County Library Book Barn where we were both volunteers. This sums up his life, always volunteering and helping others.
I miss him already.
Sonya S Stewart

Sonya S Stewart - January 25 at 11:44 AM



“ I met Fred and spoke with him annually at AEJMC conferences. I was so pleased to see him on my first visit to the downtown YMCA when I moved to Columbia. He knew everyone and introduced me around -- that was Fred. So many in the community and AEJMC circles will miss him.

Tom Reichert - January 25 at 09:36 AM



“ Richland Library book sales will never be the same without Fred. It was a joy to volunteer alongside Fred for many years. If a customer wanted a new mystery author recommendation, Fred was always there to name off several authors and help the customer to find those books. Many came to the sales and would specifically ask for Fred if they didn't see him there. He was a nice man and I'm so glad I had the opportunity to call him a friend. Rest easy, Fred.

stacey haynes - January 24 at 07:10 PM



“ I'm so sorry for your loss. As so many others know, Fred was kind and welcoming and amazing in his ability to remember faces and names. He treated the lowest graduate student with the same consideration as he treated the most prolific and recognized scholar. He had a way of making all of us feel seen, even when we were part of a crowded gathering. Given how special Fred was to each of us, I can't imagine your grief. May his memory be a blessing.

Hillary Warren - January 24 at 06:16 PM



“ Fred was always kind to everyone he encountered and always made each and every one of us feel special every time he saw us at the annual convention. My youngest, who first came to AEJMC with me when she was 6 weeks old, and I were sharing memories of Fred yesterday. He remembered Olivia from when she was a baby and greeted her warmly every time they connected. At perhaps his last conference with AEJMC, in San Francisco, he and Olivia shared about an hour in deep conversation in the lounge at the end of a long day. She remembers him making her laugh and making her think about so many things during that talk. That's the man that Fred was -- he focused on all of us and made us feel heard, whether we were AEJMC president or a shy teen. My heart is broken. Love you, Fred.

Jennifer Greer - January 23 at 09:17 PM



“ My name is Skyy Joyner. Mr. Fred was always nice to me. He let me visit his office to look around when I was at AEJMC and he gave my mom a hat for me when I was a baby. I still have it. He was a really nice person.

Skyy Joyner - January 23 at 10:38 AM



“ Fred was a true gentleman, God bless him.

Michelle J Clark - January 23 at 03:18 AM



“ I will always cherish Fred's support, encouragement and kindness during my term as ASJMC President, and as a member of AEJMC. I am heartbroken and extend my sympathy and condolences to his family and the AEJMC staff.

Shirley Staples Carter - January 23 at 01:27 AM



“ Fred was a great friend to Animal Protection League for many years. We first met when we recruited him to work in concessions at the Gamecock baseball games. He always watched from a spot next to the stand so we talked him into manning a portable since he was already there. That led to working many concerts and other events. If you ever attended an APL event you probably talked to him. He never met a stranger and helped raise a lot of money over the years. He certainly led a full life of service. I'll miss him...

Judy Kinney

Judy Kinney - January 22 at 07:27 PM



“ A longtime member of AEJ, I attended annual conferences for about 25 years. Fred was always cheerful and so helpful during the years he was at the organization. Condolences to the family.

SL Alexander

SL Alexander - January 22 at 06:47 PM



“ There was no one at AEJMC that didn't know Fred and of course - he knew all of us. He always had time to chat and as how you were doing. And if you ever needed anything, Fred would make sure it happened. Fred made so many things possible and he took such good care of us throughout the year - but especially at our annual conference. We are all better because we knew Fred. Rest well - our dear friend. Jan Slater, University of Illinois

Jan Slater - January 22 at 06:32 PM



“ As a former member of AEJMC and current retired member, I write to express my condolences to the family of Mr. Williams. Though I do not recollect having met him personally, I am aware that he was one of the many support staff that ensured the continuing success of, and recognition for, AEJMC as the leading organization for media and communication scholars. If the performance of current AEJMC support staff is anything to judge by, I am sure Mr. Williams would have rendered equal if not more dedicated service, especially to ensure the success of its annual conferences that attracted scholars from all over the world. May his soul rest in peace, Om Shanti, Shanti, Shanti.

Prof. Dr. Sankaran Ramanathan, APR, MIPR
Principal Mediaplus Consultancy, USA

Former Head, Special Projects
Asian Media Information and Communication Centre (AMIC)

Dr. Sankaran Ramanathan - January 22 at 06:25 PM



“ Dr. Ramanathan was recently elected to the Court of Fellows, Institute of Public Relations Malaysia (FIPR).

Dr. Sankaran Ramanathan - January 22 at 06:33 PM



“ The first thing I do when arriving at AEJMC conferences is go pick up my badge and program. For so many years, when I did that, there would be Fred -- always smiling -- standing near the registration counter. He was not only the convention planner but the welcoming beacon. I am thinking of his family at this time of lose. Susan Keith, Rutgers University

Susan Keith - January 22 at 06:10 PM



“ If we asked a random sample of members — Quick, what’s the first thing that comes to mind when you think of AEJMC? Many likely would say, “Fred Williams!” If academic organizations have a “soul,” for AEJMC Fred was a big part of it. How lucky he was to have lived a professional life so well that once-a-year encounters would leave so many of us thinking, “I’m glad Fred Williams was a part of my professional life.” We — and he — are fortunate.

Cleve Wilhoit
Bloomington IN

Cleve Wilhoit - January 22 at 06:04 PM



“ Don Shaw and I are reminiscing about Fred and his status as Mr. Convention. R. I. P dear friend.

Anne Cooper-Chen - January 22 at 05:56 PM



“ Fred remembered everyone, and he gave us all the feeling that he remembered because we were special to him -- and we were. RIP, Fred.

Maggie Patterson

Maggie Patterson - January 22 at 05:19 PM



“ Fred's smile lit up a room when he walked in to give us his updates about any number of logistical issues at many an AEJMC meeting. He had a way of making everyone feel as though they mattered. His memory will always be treasured.
--Marie Hardin, Penn State

Marie Hardin - January 22 at 05:03 PM



“ How do you say "Goodbye" to someone to someone that you worked with for 28 year? Fred was an extremely caring, friendly, thoughtful and devoted person. He helped make AEJMC the outstanding organization that it is today. he was an icon in hotel planning and negotiating conferences. He knew the "ins and outs" of hotels worked and made that work to the betterment of AEJMC. How he did all that he did for AEJMC and still had time for all the volunteering that he did, never stopped to amaze me.And he did all this with that engaging smile that he had. He had many, many friends and he will be missed. Keep smiling, Fred!

Richard Burke

Richard Burke - January 22 at 04:44 PM



“ Desserts!
Fred could order up dessert tables beyond any Willy Wonka fantasy. Yes there was that smile and that always warm greeting, but in all my years I have never seen anywhere else the kind of dessert spread that Fred ordered up for AEJMC.
Randy Reddick,
Lubbock, Texas

Randy Reddick - January 22 at 04:19 PM



“ Fred is beloved by AEJMC members. He always greeted everyone with a smile and was so helpful and kind. My husband and I are both AEJMC members. Early on, we often had to bring our young son to the convention and take turns babysitting him while the other was presenting or attending sessions. Fred noticed this the first year we brought our son, learned our son's name, and the next year had a badge with our son's name on it to make him feel welcome. He did this for many years as our son grew up. Fred extended these kind and thoughtful words and actions to many in the AEJMC. We are all saddened by this news and send our best to Fred's family.

Jan LeBlanc Wicks - January 22 at 04:16 PM



“ Fred was truly the face of AEJMC, a presence at every venue and the go-to guy for all the questions that would come tumbling out as an event moved along. I was always impressed at his memory for faces and names, as well as at his devotion to this organization. We will certainly miss him.

Sharon Dunwoody
Madison, WI

Sharon Dunwoody - January 22 at 04:11 PM



“ It's hard to add anything new to what so many others have already said about Fred. As someone else has said, one of the first things I did when I arrived at an AEJMC conference was to look for Fred and to catch up. At some point, Fred met my son, and he always asked about him after that. When I told my son today about Fred's death, his response was "Damn!" What a guy.

Tom Bowers

Tom Bowers - January 22 at 03:35 PM



“ Fred was a fixture at the uptown Columbia YMCA in the early 90's (and beyond) when I joined and starting going to it at lunch. One day Fred overheard me talking to some other members about books I had recently been reading and just came up to me and suggested that I volunteer with the Friends of the Richland County Library. He also told me about his role as a volunteer at the Friends used book sales, which I knew nothing about.

I did volunteer which began a twenty-something year friendship with Fred through the Friends. I cannot estimate the hours and hours I spent with Fred in board meetings, author events, and book sales. I remember many things about the book sales - including the fact that Fred always had many recommendations to shoppers looking for them as well as time spent with Fred counting up money after the sale was over.

Fred was the "ultimate" volunteer. More than anyone else I have had the pleasure to meet and spend time with, Fred truly understood the meaning of "community" and what it means to give your time and effort to fostering and nurturing the community in which we live in. It would be impossible to even attempt to count the number of lives that Fred influenced and touched during his years of volunteering with the Friends and with the other organizations in Columbia he gave his time to. I know he had a huge impact on how I viewed the world around me and my responsibility to give my time voluntarily to make sure it was a better place to live. I am sure many, many others would say the same thing. He will certainly be missed.

John Bradley - January 22 at 03:28 PM



“ Fred was my mentor when it came to convention planning and hotel negotiations. His smiling, pleasant manner was loved by so many in the hotel industry. His first concern was always for AEJMC and the convention attendees. He is missed.
Linda S Puntney

Linda S Puntney - January 22 at 03:16 PM



“ Fred holds a special place in the heart of all AEJMC members. From my very first conference in 1996 through serving in leadership roles, Fred always had a warm smile for me and took time to help me, no matter the myriad others things he was dealing with. He was a true gentleman and a lovely person. From all of us at the University of Oregon, our condolences to the family. May your warm memories of Fred sustain you during this time.

Pat Curtin

Pat Curtin - January 22 at 03:14 PM



“ I met Fred in the early '70s as I was leaving his next door neighbor's house after doing some home repairs. He asked if I could repair his dishwasher (which had never been used'. I flipped the breaker and it began to working. No charge so he was very grateful.

To my knowledge, the dishwasher had never been used since that day?

I had just graduated from USC J school so we became immediate friends. He celebrated most holidays with my family and was a adopted uncle to my boys and an accepted member of my extended family. Certainly one of the most eccentric family members we had. He asked me to transport the AEJMC Convention materials to DC in early '90s and that became my 'August Adventure' for the next 28 yrs. I sold him a luxury condo on USC campus in '07 and am sure that the dishwasher still has the tape and

packaging attached inside to this day.

I will be eternally grateful for his friendship and the friendship of the entire AEJMC (family) Staff in Columbia.

Fred, we love you, Bob Davis and sons Rob and Trebor

Bob Davis - January 22 at 02:20 PM



“ Fred was often the first face I saw at AEJMC conferences for many years. I loved his smile and words of encouragement to others finding their way around the conference halls. Can we start a scholarship in his honor? Yes, I'll donate.

Dorothy Bland, Ph.D. - January 22 at 02:14 PM



“ Fred was an amazing man with a ready smile and a willingness to help. He will be missed. Thank you, Fred, for all the help and laughs over the years.

Genelle Belmas, KU

Genelle Belmas - January 22 at 02:14 PM



“ I will miss Fred's smile and greeting at the AEJMC conferences I attended, from the time he was hired until he retired. He had an amazing memory for faces, including mine, and for the details of the ever more complex AEJMC conferences. Thank you, Fred, for all your support over the years.

Dave Weaver

David Weaver - January 22 at 02:03 PM



“ I was saddened to hear of Fred's death. He was an integral part of the Association for many, many years. He will be remembered as a dedicated and conscientious colleague as well as very tough negotiator to get the lowest prices for AEJMC members as possible. He loved good food and long walks and absolutely loved to travel. On a personal note, he was a delightful character and had a great zest for living.

Jennifer McGill - January 22 at 02:01 PM



“ I loved that Fred always remembered my name at the conventions. He often offered to keep my belongings for me when, as a graduate students, I couldn't afford to stay at the host hotel. I missed seeing him at the conferences when he retired, and I'm so sorry that he has passed. Cristina Azocar

Cristina Azocar - January 22 at 02:01 PM



“ Fred was the daily celebration of life's most precious gifts. He was the pure embodiment of joy, service, giving and humor. How lucky we are to have shared in his graces. Power up, Fred!

Richard Ganahl - January 22 at 01:57 PM



“ Seeing Fred in the hotel lobby and being greeted warmly by him every year always let me know that the conference was "on." He was a good man and I will miss him.

Frank Durham - January 22 at 01:53 PM



“ Fred was such an amazing person with a kind heart and smile for every person he interacted with. I knew him from AEJMC and how crucial he was to the organization and to all AEJMC members. He will be deeply missed! - Amy Schmitz Weiss

Amy Schmitz Weiss - January 22 at 01:51 PM



“ Fred was a legend in his own time, making sure AEJMC conventions ran almost flawlessly, and with a smile. Our paths often crossed outside AEJMC and had fun conversations. I'll miss him.

Doug Fisher - January 22 at 01:38 PM



“ Fred and I were student newspaper friends as students at Kansas State University, and we shared the fact that we both almost always had birthdays during the AEJMC conventions, which we both attended for more than 20 years. He was always upbeat, optimistic and friendly to all.

Jean Folkerts - January 22 at 01:36 PM



“ Fred was a fountain of information and a perpetual smile at every AEJMC Conference I attended for 20 years. From my first conference through my service as Ad Division Head, he was always there when I was lost. The world is truly an emptier place without him.

Karen Mallia - January 22 at 01:34 PM



“ Fred was one of my favorite people to work with at AEJMC. The many very talented people who worked with Fred were made better by his passion, dedication, and enthusiasm. When I was head of the Council of Divisions, Fred's expertise and leadership helped me often, and, more importantly, his many actions helped so many Divisions and Interest Groups to succeed. His sense of humor and unique personality contributed to making AEJMC such a special organization. Fred made so many of us feel welcomed no matter where a conference might be held. My condolences to Fred's many friends at AEJMC and to his entire family. His legacy is profound and he will be missed.

Bob Trumpbour
Professor of Communications
Penn State University

Bob Trumpbour - January 22 at 01:25 PM



“ As a young professor trying to organize sessions and even divisions, I worked with Fred in the 1980s and 1990s at the conventions. Not only was he a wonder of efficiency and professionalism, he always had a smile and a reassuring word as I worked through what seemed to be the chaos. He was the granite foundation of the convention, a gentleman and one of the nicest guys you'd ever meet. He will be missed. Patrick Parsons, Professor of Communication, Penn State University.

Patrick Parsons - January 22 at 01:22 PM



“ Fred's books and research in new media have profound impacts on communication and journalism students and scholars in Taiwan. His contributions is greatly missed by citizens in the Republic of Taiwan.

Dr. Kimching Kang
Presidential Fellow
Republic of TAIWAN

kimching Kang - January 22 at 01:19 PM



“ Fred Williams was generous, thoughtful, and a most competent and caring colleague. For members and officers alike, he was an embodiment of the talent, dedication and service that have made AEJMC and ASJMC the important institutions they are. Thank you, Fred!

Sharon Murphy - January 22 at 01:17 PM



“ As an AEJMC member since 1974, I well remember Fred at conventions. He knew everything--where rooms were, who was doing what, etc. There was never a stupid question for Fred. He thoroughly answered all questions with a smile. His scouting of convention sites was legendary. His instincts for what would work and would not were spot on. He never sought the spotlight though he certainly deserved it on many occasions. He will be missed, and I send my deepest sympathies to his family and colleagues.

Robert M. Ruggles
Tallahassee, FL

Robert M. Ruggles - January 22 at 01:17 PM



“ A beautiful human being -- always a smile and graceful under pressure. No detail too small. So kind to me as a grad student who didn't yet know anyone. R.I.P. Mr. Fred.

Donnalyn Pompper - January 22 at 01:10 PM



“ Fred was so proud of AEJMC and all it does and has done -- he played a major role in those accomplishments. Fred had a ready smile and a great sense of humor, even though he was usually under pressure at our conferences. Sending his loved ones my deepest condolences.

Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez - January 22 at 01:10 PM



“ Fred was always one of the people I most looked forward to talking with during my many years of attending AEJMC conferences. Somehow he always managed to smile his amazing smile and to engage in sincere conversation while simultaneously juggling hundreds of convention details. He is missed already. My condolences to Fred's family and other loved ones.

Dorothy Bowles
Emerita Professor
University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Dorothy Bowles - January 22 at 01:07 PM



“ The world is a little less bright without Fred in it. I enjoyed his smile, laugh and stories at conferences and got to know him better when I was ASJMC president. One of my favorite memories was during out ASJMC conference in Mexico City. Rest in peace.

Brad Rawlins - January 22 at 01:06 PM



“ Fred approached life with joy. He lived his life as true gentleman. His ability to make things happen are legendary. He will be missed.

Ginny Whitehouse - January 22 at 01:05 PM



“ As a fellow KSU Wildcat and AEJMC member, I will miss seeing him at conferences. He enthusiasm and competence, as well as his comforting presence, will be missed. Deepest sympathies to his family. Theresa Russell-Loretz, chair, Department of Communication and Theatre, Millersville University.

Theresa Russell-Loretz - January 22 at 12:57 PM



“ I didn't know Fred well, but whenever I interacted with AEJMC over the years, he always seemed to have a smile, a helpful explanation, some small bit of kindness. What a lovely person. Thank you, Fred.

Linda Jones
Roosevelt University

Linda Jones - January 22 at 12:55 PM



“ Our deepest sympathy to the family of Fred Williams from the E.W. Scripps School of Journalism, Ohio University.

Eddith Dashiell - January 22 at 12:53 PM



“ Condolences to Williams family. Fred was the heartbeat of AEJMC. He will be missed.

Mia Moody-Ramirez - January 22 at 12:51 PM



“ I'm very sorry to hear of this. He will be missed.

Sheila Lalwani - January 22 at 12:47 PM



“ Fred! I am better for knowing you. I am better for working with you and I am better for you being my friend. You were always a bright light with a wonderful smile. You genuinely cared about everyone you interacted with. I will always remember you. My kids will always remember you. Fly high Fred! I love you. Sam

Samantha Higgins - January 22 at 12:41 PM



“ Fred was a thoughtful soul. Many of our days were made happy by his kindness. He will be dearly missed.

--Kyshia Brown

Kyshia Brown - January 22 at 12:36 PM



“ As a former University of South Carolina student/faculty member and later on the AEJMC board, I'm grateful for all he did and am sad today for myself and his family.

--Chris Roberts
Department of Journalism and Creative Media
The University of Alabama

Chris Roberts - January 22 at 10:31 AM



“ "We are extremely sorry to hear the sad news of Fred. He was a wonderful person and a friend to everybody. I knew him since 1988. He was the "google" for our all conference information from registration to the end. In fact, at the last San Francisco conference he helped me with the luggage at the hotel. A perfect gentleman with positive thoughts and smiles. We will miss him very much. Our all prayers for him and his family."

Shafiqur Rahman, Professor
Communications Program
SC State University

Shafiqur Rahman - January 22 at 02:06 PM



“ Fred is greatly missed. However, no doubt he is using his kind soul, unique humor and megawatt smile to brighten up heaven. Such a wonderful person who always went out of his way to say nice things and be gracious. -- Lucinda Davenport

Lucinda Davenport - January 22 at 02:20 PM



“ Fred's smile, willingness to help answer any question and solve whatever problem emerged during our annual conventions are among the many positive memories that will certainly be remembered by the AEJMC academic family. May that spirit of service and personal charm be emulated by all of us.

Federico Subervi
Austin, TX

Federico - January 22 at 03:18 PM



“ Oh, so many memories. Every AEJMC president has been awed by Fred's ability to get the best out of a convention hotel. August was special, because we always celebrated Fred's birthday at the convention. The hotel staff took special care of him as he did with them. He always knew something personal about everyone-and we all cherished his friendship. You made a difference in my life. With gratitude, Barbara Hines-2009 AEJMC president.

Barbara Hines - January 22 at 09:52 PM



“ My name is Sylvia O'Boyle (Columbia, SC) and I knew Fred because, more than 30 years ago, he brought his Visla to an obedience class. He was such an outgoing, friendly person that I felt like I had known him forever. Over the years, I would bump into him at the Richland Library book sales, and my husband got to know him through the YMCA. I wish Fred could see the pouring of comments and kind thoughts that people are posting. The comments are a reflection of his warm and enthusiastic personality. He would grin. R.I.P

Sylvia O'Boyle - January 24 at 10:54 AM



“ Fred, so happy that your body is not in pain any more -my friend- you will be missed.
Lana Hefner Book Barn Thursday Morning Group

Lana Hefner - January 24 at 06:13 PM



“ My sympathies to the family of Fred. He was a good person with the warm personality and memorable smile. Thank you Fred for being a wonderful part of many of my AEJMC conference experiences.

Zeny Sarabia-Panol, ICD & ICRJ

Zeny Sarabia-Panol - January 28 at 03:24 PM



“ Fred had such a kind smile. As a new member of AEJMC many years ago, every time I visited a new city and was cast into these massive hotels, I always felt like someone was there watching out for me every time I first spotted Fred. He was a constant comfort. So many of my colleagues and friends have posted above. We loved Fred dearly and I am saddened to hear this news.

Kevin Williams - February 02 at 07:35 PM