



John Stevenson Downing

June 20, 1954 - August 17, 2022

On August 17, 2022, John “Johnny” Stevenson Downing passed away at the age of 68 from pulmonary disease. He arrived with a twinkle in his eye at Mercedes General Hospital in 1954.

The youngest son of Bill and Mary Ann Downing, Johnny spent much of his childhood living in the farmhouse where his mother had lived. After graduating from Mercedes High School in 1973, Johnny set off for college in Austin. He worked his way through – washing dishes, clearing tables, selling furniture, and even writing and publishing a comic book series called Austin Comics. Comic book sales not meeting expectations, Johnny heeded his father Bill’s advice and concentrated on completing his degree.

He graduated from the University of Texas at Austin in 1980, and returned to South Texas to teach elementary school in Santa Maria where he fell in love with second grade teacher Maria Portillo. They married in Maui, after a five-year courtship, and returned to live in Mercedes. Several years later they moved into their final home, the family farmhouse, where their daughter Jessica Nicole was born in 1989. The 1990s were busy years for Johnny and Maria as they raised Jessica, taught school, and managed the citrus orchards. Their lives continued to be blessed with Jessica's marriage to Joe Cuellar and the birth of three grandsons.

Johnny was a grandfather like no other. Admittedly the antics of grandfather

and grandson were sometimes indistinguishable. Described sometimes as the Facebook Sage of Mercedes, Johnny possessed a unique sense of humor and a brand of wisdom which lifted all. He reveled in entertaining and telling jokes and stories and listening to the tales of the people he met. During retirement, he established several small businesses including Aloe King Golf Course, El Quinto Farms Citrus, and Aloe Vera Farm Tours.

He was a lifelong member of the First Presbyterian Church of Mercedes where he served as an elder for many years and seldom missed a Sunday. Johnny often worked quietly behind the scenes generously supporting others in need with his time and resources. Johnny is survived by his wife Maria Rosa Portfillo Downing, daughter Jessica Nicole Cuellar and her husband Jose Daniel Cuellar Jr, grandsons Jose Daniel Cuellar III, Jonathan David Cuellar, and Jace Donovan Cuellar, and by his brother James Alexander Downing and his wife Candace Elaine Limb Downing.

He is preceded in death by his parents William Calvin "Bill" Downing and Mary Ann Prothro Downing, and brothers Randall Scott Downing and William Rex Downing. Johnny's mother Mary Ann is remembered to often say, "You will get your reward in heaven." There is no doubt that Johnny is heavenly bound, and many rewards await him, but down here on earth, we were caught by surprise when he was called so suddenly. Our hearts ache as we move on to a world without his bright light.

Services for John Stevenson Downing will be held Monday August 22, 2022. Visitations will be from 1:00 P.M. to 8:00 P.M. with a chapel service at 6:00 P.M. All services are under the care and direction of Rudy Garza Funeral Home of Mercedes Texas.

Tribute Wall



“ *John downing was my grandpa and I really do miss him R.I.P*

Joey Cuellar - September 01, 2023 at 12:41 PM



“ *Emerald Garden Basket was purchased for the family of John Stevenson Downing.*



August 21, 2022 at 09:48 PM



“ *This is a beautifully written obituary. Of course, I read it in Johnny's voice and added some well placed hyperbole and sarcasm along with a joke or two. I'm going to miss Johnny's Facebook posts and I will forever belly laugh when I remember him being Jimmy's "dummy"!! Gone far too soon.*

Lalla Beachum - August 20, 2022 at 11:11 AM



“ *Our thoughts and prayers are with the family. Love & prayers always.*

Joyce & John McCorquodale

Joyce McCorquodale - August 20, 2022 at 09:28 AM



“ *Beautiful in Blue* was purchased for the family of *John Stevenson Downing*.



August 19, 2022 at 02:02 PM