

RICHARD "RICH" SMITH ALSBERRY



Of Monroeville, passed away surrounded by loved ones, on Saturday, August 24, 2024, eight days after celebrating his 73rd birthday. Rich was born in Grove City, PA, on August 16, 1951, to the late Pauline (Smith) Alsberry, and the late Joseph Alsberry, Jr. The family moved to Beltzhoover, where he grew up with his brothers David Alsberry, Gary Alsberry, and the late Joseph Alsberry III; and not far from his

extended family, including his favorite cousin Robert "Bobby" Alsberry Jr. After the passing of his mother, Rich gained and enjoyed a relationship with his late stepmother Elizabeth "Betty" (Jones) Alsberry who he cared for until her passing.

Rich's love for sports started at a young age, playing stickball with Negro League baseball players when they came for dinner at his late Uncle Vic Harris's home. Rich played basketball and baseball from little league throughout his college years. He graduated from South Hills High School in 1969, where he lettered in both sports three years, and he received his Bachelor's in English from North Carolina Wesleyan University, where he was an All-Conference 2nd Baseman his last two years. He went on to earn his master's degree at Iowa State for Landscape Architecture. After a short stint in the Minor League baseball's farm system, Rich returned home to Pittsburgh, closer to his family and late son, Sean Camp.

Shortly after returning home, Rich started his 47-year journey of basketball refereeing. During his referee career, he officiated over 10,000 games at the youth, high school, and collegiate levels, traveling around the tri-state area. Rich was a founding member of the Pittsburgh Urban Officials Association, and remained an integral part of the organization his whole refereeing career. He served as chapter president for 12 years, and held almost every position on the executive board, most recently chapter assigner. He was assigning games even as he was fighting for his return to good health. Rich was well respected as a basketball official, commonly joking with players and coaches, but not afraid to T-up a coach if warranted. He also enjoyed the time after basketball games, cracking open a beer or bottle of wine with his fellow officials in the parking lot. In his 40 years of officiating, he had worked many NCAA, NAIA, WPIAL, and City League playoff, and championship games. During his high school officiating career with the PIAA, he refereed three state, four WPIAL, and 10 City League Championship games. During his college officiating career, he refereed three NCAA regional tournaments, four District 18, four President's Athletic Conference, and three Pennsylvania Athletic Conference championship games.

Rich coached basketball, starting in the Connie Hawkins League, coaching The Force. Not only was he the founder of the legendary Icemen basketball team, but he also led them to 12 championships, staking his name as the winningest coach in the Ozanam Summer Basketball League's history.

Rich gained a daughter, Michelle Lubiano, with his first wife, Ava (Webb) Alsberry, and together they had Richard Joseph Alsberry, and Reneé Marie (Alsberry) Richardson (Shawn). When living with his family in Vandergrift, he enjoyed playing softball, announcing youth football games, playing in Friday night poker games, fishing, and coaching Little Rich and Reneé's youth sports teams. Rich started umpiring baseball when living in Vandergrift. He continued umpiring for over 30 years in the American Legion, Pony, high school, and little leagues.

Rich met and married his adoring wife Shirley, and completed his family gaining Kelly Dillard, Erin (Lauren) Russell, and Amanda (Harold) Gee as children. Rich and Shirley resided in New Kensington and Monroeville together. Rich and Shirley enjoyed traveling together, especially to Jamaica, going to Pirates games, and hosting the annual 4th of July picnics. They also spent a lot of time with their grandchildren, (Bobby, Isaiah, Jameson, Shawn Jr., Jalen, Alaena, Naomi, Daemien, Max, Demetrius, Madden, and Navy), attending school functions, cheering them on in sports, and loving them every way they could.

Rich retired from Bayer as the warehouse supervisor in 2019. Though as Rich got older, his impact to kids and the basketball community especially referees never waned. He continued volunteering and giving back to the Ozanam Summer Basketball League's Breakfast Club and his organization, The Pittsburgh Basketball Federation. Rich was inducted into the 2015 Class of the Pittsburgh Basketball Club Hall of Fame, and South Hills High School Alumni Association's All Sports Hall of Fame in 2023. He coached 9th grade basketball at Riverview High School, going undefeated last season and winning the season ending tournament.

Rich was a mentor to many! He absolutely loved his family and friends! Though there will be no more messages from the Balcony on Earth, his legacy will live on in those he impacted and through his surviving family members including wife, brothers, children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, cousins, and friends.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks that donations be made in Rich's name and honor to The Pittsburgh Basketball Federation (Pittsburgh Basketball Federation, P.O. Box 236, Verona, PA 15147), or Ozanam Summer Basketball League (<http://www.ozanaminc.org/legends>). Friends will be received, Thursday, August 29, 2024, at 4:00 pm to 8:00 pm at **SOXMAN FUNERAL HOMES, LTD./ROTH CHAPEL**, 7450 Saltsburg Road (at Universal Road), Penn Hills. A service will be held Friday, August 30, 2024, at 11:00 am at Hebron United Presbyterian Church, 10460 Frankstown Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15235. Everyone please gather at church.

Send condolences post-gazette.com/gb