



Roy Turner Arnold

March 27, 1933 - April 28, 2024

Coleman Funeral Home of Oxford

Roy Turner Arnold, University of Mississippi Professor Emeritus of Physics and Astronomy, stopped talking and texting just before dawn on Sunday, April 28, 2024, at the age of 91.

Roy was born on March 27, 1933, and from an early age was curious. He wasn't just a child who asked "Why?" but would follow that question with "How can you know that?" Roy never stopped observing and querying. He approached life by looking at it from various angles. His thoughts were anything but orthodox. His questions often made others uncomfortable as he challenged their thoughts, beliefs, reasoning, and conclusions.

Over the years, Roy developed multiple interests, hobbies, passions, and special projects that were left mostly unfinished. He was a carpenter, poet, golfer, tennis player, pilot, fisherman, scientist, and long-winded talker. He loved telling stories, helping kids develop a curiosity for the world around them, Jack Nicklaus's golf game, and taking naps during the Masters. He enjoyed watching high school football, college football, old westerns, *It's a Wonderful Life*, the movie *Gettysburg*, and every WWII movie made. He violated the unwritten rule of Thanksgiving, Christmas, and any social occasion by talking politics and religion. He was a man who cared little for

chit-chat and cared deeply about theoretical solutions to real world problems. Everyone who knew him learned something from Roy, even if it was what not to do. He was tough and he was kind. He was wise and yet still naive. His smile could brighten a room, and his temper could block the sun. He was brilliant and passionate, but he was just human. He was different from anyone you'll meet, and the same as everyone you know.

Those left with the sound of silence and no texts to read from him include his wife, Kathy Shoalmire, their son, Turner Arnold, and their dog, Bocephus. He was preceded in death by his first wife, Betty, but is survived by their children Belvia Ferguson, Suzy Nicks (Bob), and Clara Lee Arnold. Other survivors include his five grandchildren Amanda Zehnder Thielman (Jake), Jacob Roy Zehnder, Taylor Ferguson Catalano, Bobby Nicks (Alisha), Logan Nicks, five great-grandchildren, one great-great grandson, his sister, Nancy Arnold Sherbert, and numerous nieces and nephews. His sisters Katrina Joyce Arnold Van Courtland and Gloria Arnold Crosby pre-deceased him.

The family wishes to express deep appreciation to Enhabit Hospice for the care, attention to details, and guidance they provided for almost two years. At the end of his life, he enjoyed the visits from Claire, who faithfully brought him milkshakes, the attention from Sally (who loved to listen to his stories about the Jackson Zoo and Latimer's pasture), and the excellent end of life care provided by Terrica, Khiya, and Shala.

Memorial contributions can be made to the Rise and Shine Fund at St. Peter's Episcopal Church 113 S. Ninth Street Oxford, MS 38655 or a charity of your choice.

This ends the official obituaryand if you want to know more....

Adventurous and mischievous were the words Roy used to describe his

childhood growing up in Jackson, Mississippi. He was a great storyteller and loved telling stories about his nighttime adventures slipping into the Jackson Zoo with the “big boys” in the neighborhood. One

particularly memorable night was in 1942, when they challenged him to climb on top of the tiger’s cage and touch the tiger as a “right of passage.” As he was climbing up, a limb brushed a nearby cage with a sound that made the big boys run. They assumed he had touched the tiger. He never corrected them. He told lots of stories about growing up during “the war” and had fond memories of the World War II soldiers throwing quarters into Livingston Lake for the kids to dive for.

Tragically, Roy was orphaned at the age of 14. His father, Roy Arnold died in 1940 and his mother Esther Bowers Arnold died in 1947. For a few years, he and his sisters were cared for by their grandmothers; but, at the age of 16, he found himself at Raymond Agricultural High School where he had room and board which he covered by working in the school cafeteria. The high school was tied to Hinds Junior College (HJC) which allowed him to start taking advanced math and science classes. Hinds was where he started appreciating his intelligence, especially his math skills and his analytical abilities.

After finishing at HJC, he continued his academic pursuits at Millsaps College where he studied chemistry, mathematics, and physics. His interest in pursuing his advanced degrees was almost stymied until one day he noticed the application for a National Atomic Energy Fellowship. He applied and was selected which gave him the opportunity to study nuclear physics at Vanderbilt. He received both his Master’s degree and Ph.D. from Vanderbilt.

While at Vanderbilt, he was exposed to great professors and theoreticians. He

was assigned to work on the new Cockcroft-Walton accelerator and was surprised one day in his lab when he turned around and there stood Dr. Walton. Dr. Walton questioned him and then remarked, "I believe you've got this working better than I ever did." One of his favorites to be exposed to was Richard Feynman. His admiration for Feynman and his contributions to physics continued throughout his life. In fact, a week before he died or in his own words "went to see what was around the corner", Roy asked to listen to the Feynman Lectures.

Roy taught physics at Ole Miss for nearly 25 years before he retired in 1987. His professional career ended with significant contributions to the study of lightning and thunderstorms. He was co-founder of PARGUM (Physical Acoustics Research Group at the University of Mississippi). Roy was one of the first tornado chasers. He hypothesized that if one could capture the sound of the tornado and map it, ultimately a tornado detector could be developed for home use. Sounds were captured, analyzed, and a prototype was built. However, Roy never felt it was accurate enough to market.

Roy took leave from the University in 1985 to head up the Diagnostic Instrumentation Division for the Institute of Technology Development. His work at ITD contributed to the National Center for Space Remote Sensing, The National Center for Physical Acoustics (for which he was honored as a Founding Father), and the expansion of the microelectronics division at Mississippi State University.

After his retirement, he applied the laws of physics to automobile accidents working with both plaintiff and defense attorneys and insurance companies. After a decade, he decided he had better things to do.

For years he had played golf at the Oxford Country Club and Ole Miss, but once he "retired", he could be found every weekday on the Ole Miss Golf

Course for his 11:00 tee time with “the boys” – Preacher, Cook, Poole, and Sheffield. He was officially honored a few years ago as a Legend of the Ole Miss Golf Course.

As an older father, Roy enjoyed coaching OPC sports. His son, Turner, said he learned leadership skills from watching his dad coach OPC flag football and basketball. He said, “Dad always looked at each kid as if they had something to offer the team. He made sure each kid played the same amount of time and was put in a position where they would have success. He always wanted the kid to have a positive experience.”

Roy was a non-stop talker who focused intently on whatever topic he was thinking about that day, not unlike the way Feynman has been described. During his last years he came to believe and was focused on the thought that we are all co-creators with a purpose to create. He was fascinated with what scientists would conclude from information gathered by the James Webb Space Telescope. He was sitting on ready to ask, “how could you possibly conclude that?” He would be honored if you reflected on yourself as a co-creator and queried any findings and conclusions from the Webb Telescope.

Tribute Wall

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“ *My very favorite human (and Granny) Oxford will never be the same. Love you!!*

Amanda - May 29, 2024 at 07:29 PM