



# David Orbaugh

SEP 19, 1939 - JAN 4, 2024



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## David Orbaugh

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**D**avid Robert Orbaugh, 84, of Huntersville, NC passed away Thursday, January 4, 2024 of complications from COVID-19. He was born in Indianapolis, IN and grew up in Miami, FL. Dave often described his childhood years in Miami spent fishing and exploring the beaches and parks as living in a tropical paradise. One of his delights was swimming at night in Coral Gables' Venetian Pool and bicycling home along the quiet, dark streets of Miami.

Dave's professional life began while a pre-teen in Miami, where he operated a one-man lawn and garden care business. Part of his service included cultivating scrap cuttings, which grew into "new" plants he then sold back to the same customers.

Dave graduated from Miami Senior High School in 1957 and served in the United States Air Force Reserves from 1958-1964. He was honorably discharged and recommended for reenlistment.

After basic training in the United States Air Force, Dave returned to Miami and was hired at The Miami Herald to work in the Camera Platemaking Department. In the mid- to latter-20th century, papers were printed from steel plates fixed onto reels. Dave was one of the plate makers. But the introduction of computers into the newspaper business instantly intrigued him. He pestered the Human Resources Director to let him have a job in this new department, until finally wearing the man down with his persistence. Dave started with the basics: learning how to program, while enrolling in the new computer classes offered at night at the local community college. He was meticulous and detail-oriented, two qualities that served him well in the field of computers. Dave was promoted regularly and in 1975 was recruited to work at The Charlotte Observer newspaper in Charlotte, NC, as Director of Advanced Systems, the early name for the computer department. After a 41-year career in newspapers, Dave retired in 2001 as Vice President of Information and Technology at The Charlotte Observer.

Retirement did not slow Dave at all. In fact, it gave him more time to pursue his social justice commitments to prison ministry and mission work in other countries. He practiced his faith in



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impactful ways through opportunities in the Methodist Church. Retirement also gave him the time to engage in his favorite pastime, gardening. Dave created beautiful gardens both at his Huntersville home and at his and Tonya's cabin in the mountains. He continued his love of gardening and being outside until he contracted COVID on December 20, 2023.

Dave was a quiet man with deadpan humor who also could achieve the New York Times Spelling Bee "Genius" level before his second cup of coffee. Though reared during a time period when social justice and equality were often ignored by those in positions of privilege, Dave spent his life quietly working for change and creating opportunities for marginalized people. He served for many years on the Board of Directors for The Salvation Army and The Belmont Avenue Boys and Girls Club in Charlotte. He was an active member of Kairos Prison Ministry and traveled on mission trips to multiple countries, including Cuba, Guatemala, and Kenya. He and Tonya sponsored several young Kenyans' educations and helped to build a school in Nakuru, Kenya.

An avid soccer fan, Dave enjoyed refereeing for 15 years through the North Carolina Soccer Referee Association (NCSRA). Maybe it was all that physical activity that kept him younger than his years. A handsome man with an enviable head of hair, it was suspected that Dave secretly hid a youthful portrait of himself in the attic as in the novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde. Even during his last days in the hospital, healthcare professionals were astonished to learn that their patient was, in fact, 84 years old.

Dave was preceded in death by parents, Robert Deloss Orbaugh and Pauline Miner Orbaugh, and sister Patricia Ponce.

Dave is survived by his wife of 33 years Tonya Wertz-Orbaugh; daughter Elizabeth (Beth) K. Piojda (Joe) of Franklinton, NC; son Ken D. Orbaugh of New Bern, NC; and granddaughter Ashlee E. Piojda of Franklinton NC and Savannah, GA; Two half-sisters, Rose Charland and Kathy Ramsey, both of Orlando, FL. Dave also leaves behind his "adopted" daughter Breanne Weber of Charlottesville, VA, four nephews, and many relatives and friends whose relationships he cherished. He leaves behind his beloved dog Eli, who will miss his Pawpa forever. Dave will be missed by so many people, which is a testament to the love he both gave and received.

Dave requested a Celebration of Life in lieu of a funeral, which will be held in April.



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Memorial Gifts may be made to Kairos of North Carolina Prison Ministry, State Financial Secretary, P. O. Box 2543, Shelby, NC 28151 (You may also donate online <https://kairosnc.org/edonation> ) Or feel free to give to the charity of your choice.

James Funeral Home is assisting the family, online condolences may be made at [www.jamesfuneralhomelkn.com](http://www.jamesfuneralhomelkn.com).



# Tribute Wall

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**Anonymous** sent a Full Of Love Bouquet to the Orbaugh family.



January 13 at 5:56 AM



**Monica Sena** lit a candle in honor of David.

This is difficult to write, it is difficult to put into words the great man that Dave was. Dave paid for my university education and is the reason , I am where I am today because of Dave. Dave dedicated his life to be of service to others, he was kind , he was compassionate and a man of his word. Dave's legacy of servant leadership will live on in the lives he touched. Dave made my life better, his humility, advise and celebration of others is rare. You lived a good life and did so much. It breaks my heart that you are gone. I am struggling to write this, I am heartbroken for your loved ones and all of those you touched. May you rest in eternal peace. Your legacy, the many lives you touched positively will always live on.



January 9 at 5:24 AM



**Tonya Wertz-Orbaugh** January 11 at 3:07 PM

That's a lovely tribute. Thank you, Monica.



# Tribute Wall

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**Tony Wainaina** lit a candle in honor of David.



I have agonized about whether what I will put in writing will do justice to the rich legacy of this good friend. Just like you know that the camera never captures the sceneries or the moments as the eye saw them....Dave was the first face I met when I and my young family set foot on the land of the brave that chilly night of December 8 2010 at Charlotte Douglas arrivals. And so a friendship began. Dave ( and Tonya) walked with my family during the especially trying 2011 when my health took a hit. From one doctor's office to another, Charlotte to Highpoint, and the Emergency, Dave left it at the point when I was admitted and got the care I badly needed. I am still humbled by the image of Dave sitting on the floor of our humble dwelling, cross-legged assembling a table or something to help us settle while I could not lift myself from the couch. His genuine compassion was testament to those who encountered him in need. Dave introduced me to Kairos and the beauty of the gospel of service that he so strongly cherished and practiced. And on those long drives to Kershaw, Dave would always be the mentor that he was. My daughters especially still cherish their first trip to see the leaves in the mountains with Dave any Tonya and the great memories of that weekend. I know Dave is in a happy place and his great deeds speak for him into eternity. Go well my friend, and may God whom you faithfully served look unto you with the kindest of countenance. Rest in eternal peace.

January 5 at 5:19 PM



**Tonya Orbaugh** January 15 at 2:24 PM

Such a lovely tribute, Tony. Thank you. Dave treasured your friendship.



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KR

**Kathy Ramsey** posted:

Dave was my older brother- older by 23 years (yes Tonya and I are the same age! and we both enjoy listening to the same 70's and 80's music much to Dave's chagrin) . Before I was in school Dave was married and starting his family with his beautiful children Beth and Ken and eventually moving from Florida to North Carolina. I knew Dave was loving, kind and always thoughtful, but I didn't really know him and understand him until recently over the last ten years. I spent two wonderful Thanksgiving's with Dave and Tonya and I am so grateful for the time we had together and the sharing that we had during these two holidays. I especially enjoyed playing some crazy card game - it was so fun and it really let me see Dave's witty humor. I am so proud that Dave made his faith a priority in his life and was committed to serving those in need. His wife Tonya was definitely his soul mate and his love for her was worn on his sleeve, albeit sometimes with a mischievous grin. The night before his passing I was in the chapel praying and singing with others and I knew that we were serenading Dave's soul to God and he was at great peace. Eternal rest grant unto him O Lord and may your perpetual light shine upon him. May Dave rest in Peace. With Love- your little sister Kathy

January 7 at 3:25 PM

TO

**Tonya Orbaugh** January 15 at 2:25 PM

Beautiful memories that you'll always have. Thank you for posting.

ME

**Michael Ruiz-Esparza** posted:

My first experience with David when I attended my first weekend at Kershaw Correctional about 15 years ago. I was a little nervous about the weekend and David put me at ease. He was wearing a Hawaiian shirt, a wonderful smile, and was so complimentary about whatever I had to say. David delivered authentic and compelling talks to the residents of Kershaw. He talked about the joys of his life, he started with his changed life in Christ, their special adopted daughter in Africa, and wonderful & blessing of his wife. God bless you brother.

January 6 at 1:38 PM

TO

**Tonya Orbaugh** January 15 at 2:26 PM

Thank you for posting f your memories of Dave.



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DR

**David Rourke** posted:

I had the privilege to serve with David in the Kairos ministry. We will miss him but know he is in the care of our Lord. Peace be with you brother David! 🙏

January 6 at 10:08 AM

TO

**Tonya Orbaugh** January 15 at 2:26 PM

Thank you for your comment.

PC

**Paul E Caldwell** posted:

Brother Dave and I served in Kairos Prison Ministry for number of years. We specifically served as leaders 2014 - 2015. Dave always had a sense of humor and attention to detail. His contributions at Kershaw Correctional Institution for those many years surely impacted a multitude of lives and the kingdom of God has been richly blessed because of his presence and servanthood. I and other Kairos brothers will miss Dave. Peace be with family

January 6 at 7:34 AM

TO

**Tonya Orbaugh** January 15 at 2:27 PM

Dave will be missed by so many people. Thank you for sharing your memories of Dave.

TH

**Tracy Hewett** posted:

Smart and handsome enough to charm one of the smartest, funniest, and most beautiful woman I know into marrying him! What a wonderful couple...33 years! Tonya you captured Dave's accomplishments and passions so perfectly. I hope you find peace and joy in daily slices. Love you much

January 6 at 5:34 AM

TO

**Tonya Orbaugh** January 15 at 2:28 PM

Thank you, Tracy, for your comment. Lots of love to you.



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**Tom Fisher** posted:

It was a privilege to serve alongside David as part of Kairos Prison Ministry. We're thankful to have known him, and look forward to more fellowship at the renewal of all things.

January 5 at 6:18 PM



**Tonya Orbaugh** January 15 at 2:28 PM

Thank you for posting, Tom.



**Jacki Lynn Baynks** posted:

Dave was kind and genuine. His compassion for others and faith was lived out in his social justice activities and relationships. Dave loved with greatness--I'm so glad I had opportunities to see the love he shared with his wife. My sincere condolences to Tonya and the rest of the family. His is a life worth celebrating. Jacki-Lynn

January 5 at 5:19 PM



**Tonya Orbaugh** January 15 at 2:29 PM

Thank you, Jacki Lynn. I know you held a special place for Dave in your heart. He was a great man. Much love to you.



# Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring David by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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