



## James Hightower

April 6, 1926 - January 13, 2012

Memorial services for James Keith Hightower, 85, are scheduled for Tuesday, January 17 at 2:00 PM, under the direction of Stewart Family Funeral Home at Marvin United Methodist Church with Dr. John Robbins and Rev. Doug Baker officiating. A reception will follow in Pirtle Hall. Private burial will be at Rose Hill Cemetery, Tyler. Mr. Hightower passed away Friday, January 13, 2012, at his home in Tyler. Keith was a gentleman, a man of unfaltering faith, a loyal friend, and a man of integrity who was proud of his family whom he loved deeply. He was born on April 6, 1926, in Mount Vernon, Franklin County, to the late James Alexander Hightower and Durine Holder Hightower. In 1929 the family moved to Henderson where he attended public schools, lettering in football, basketball, baseball and track in high school. He was sworn into the army during World War II on July 19, 1944. After training in the field artillery at Camp Roberts, California, he was sent to the Philippines and served on the islands of Leyte and Luzon until the war ended. He was then stationed in occupied Japan in the cities of Osaka and Kobe. He was discharged on August 10, 1946, as a master sergeant. Following his army career, he attended Kilgore College and Baylor University on football scholarships. He played center on the 1946 Kilgore College team that finished the season undefeated and picked as the number one junior college team in the nation. They were invited to play in the first Little Rose Bowl in Pasadena, California, against Compton College. He played on the Baylor football team in 1948 and 1949. Later, he officiated high school and college football games for twenty-

two years and was a member of the Southwest Football Officials Association. In his earlier years, Keith enjoyed playing golf and was an avid tennis player. Keith was graduated from Baylor University with a degree in business administration. He was a football coach and mathematics teacher at Kilgore High School for three years before, in 1953, going to work in the Land Department for Humble Oil & Refining Company (now ExxonMobil) in Tyler. He became a Certified Professional Landman and was Field Land Manager, East Texas District, when he retired in August 1986 after thirty-three rewarding years. He continued to work for the company six more years as a consultant. Before his illness, he enjoyed his many friends at the Olympic Center and never missed his daily workout. He looked forward to his weekly dominoes game at Willow Brook Country Club and spent many hours studying the stock market. For over fifty years, he met on Saturday mornings with a group of men for coffee. Other activities include: secretary of the East Texas Landmen's Association, president of the Tyler Petroleum Club, director-at-large of the Tyler Area Chamber of Commerce, president of the Tyler Tennis and Swim Club, director of the Baylor Ex-students Association, member of the Baylor Letterman's Association, first vice president of the Tyler Baylor Club, member of the Baylor Heritage Club, chairman of the American Cancer Society of Smith County, member of the American Association of Petroleum Landmen and Masonic Lodge No. 1371. He was a present member of Willow Brook Country Club. For more than fifty-five years he was a member of Marvin United Methodist Church where he was a past member of the Administrative Board and an early member and past president of the Crusaders Sunday School Class. Survivors include his devoted wife of sixty-one years, Zelda Walker Hightower, and their children: James Maxwell Hightower and wife Nancy, Julie Ann Collier and husband Ross, all of Dallas, Sarah Lynn Bryan and husband Bill, Tyler; grandchildren: Blaine Maxwell Hightower, James Keith Hightower II, Trevor Ross Collier, all of Dallas, and Laura Elaine Bryan, Tyler; sister-in-law Peggy Scott, Tyler; stepsister Patsy Rhodes Gibson, Waco; and several nieces and nephews. In addition to his parents, Keith was

preceded in death by an infant son Blaine Mitchell Hightower and a stepsister Barjorie Fisher. Honorary pallbearers will be William F. Turner, Allen Locklin, Bill Ross, Clyde Davis, Earl Stout, John Regan, Frank Budde, Jim Arnold, Glenn Taylor, Dan Ballenger and Don O'Neal. The family wishes to express their appreciation to his dedicated caregivers Quincy Mitchell, Earnest Gibson, Sonja Burks, Schantella Dixon, Frances Johnson, and Pam Dean, R.N. of Hospice. In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to The Hospice of East Texas Foundation, 4111 University Boulevard, Tyler, 75701, or to Marvin United Methodist Church, 300 West Erwin Street, Tyler, 75702.

# Tribute Wall



“ *I enjoyed many doubles Tennis matches with Kieth at Tyler Tennis and Swim. Alway's a true gentleman and a joy to be around. I know he will be missed by his many friends and family. May God give all of his family peace in the day's to come.*

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**Jeff Jones** - January 13, 2012 at 12:00 AM