



Jay Thomas Calhoun

February 8, 1954 - September 1, 2026

Paducah, Kentucky

Jay Thomas Calhoun died in Paducah on September 1, 2026. He was seventy-two. Born there on February 8, 1954, he grew up knowing the Ohio as a clock and a weather report. His father worked a lock. Jay learned a galley before he learned a necktie. He became a towboat cook because a crew that waits is a kind of insult, and because he liked a job whose mistakes were immediately visible.

For twenty-eight years he kept barges fed that other men only blamed on the river. He arrived early. He did not advertise. Pilots called him because he would tell the truth about a stew even when the truth postponed a joke. He charged a fair hour on the side when a widow's outboard needed more mercy than a marina. He kept a notebook of stages, not clients.

He married Beverly Calhoun in 1976. They raised two children in a frame house that needed a new porch every twenty years. Beverly kept the library desk. Jay grilled on Sundays and considered a plate of catfish a seasonal obligation. After he retired he still came out when a neighbor's auger died, moving slower, charging less.

Friends remember a man who left a galley cleaner than he found it, who could stand in a noise without making it a personality, and who loved a quiet porch at dusk. He died in Paducah, in the city whose river had written his calendar. The lock still opens. Someone else will hear the sound that means supper.

Services

Visitation in Paducah, then a simple service. A gift to a river-safety program or a youth fishing fund is welcome.

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