



Ross James Strayer

March 26, 1956 - December 6, 2022

ANN ARBOR- Ross James Strayer, 66, of Ann Arbor, Michigan died on Tuesday, December 6, 2022.

Born on March 26, 1956 on the Fort McClellan Army Base in Alabama, he was the son of James and Delores (Karlek) Strayer. Ross graduated from Adrian High School with the Class of 1974. He went on to Eastern Michigan University where he received both a Bachelor's and Master's degree in Education.

Ross was a biology instructor at Washtenaw Community College for over three decades. He had the honor of building upon a tradition started by his father (James Strayer) of excellent science teaching at WCC. Ross loved nature and would hold classes outdoors as often as possible, away from books and desks and out into the woods beyond the college. While on these excursions, he would use his extensive knowledge of the natural world around him to craft real-world experiences with the things and processes his students were studying. Peer and students alike appreciated Ross's patience, kindness, and authentic love for the subjects he taught.

Ross was a talented musician throughout his life. He started playing the drums in clubs when he was only 15 years old and, in adulthood, grew into a talented guitarist as well. He was always excited about going to a new music shop (where one might lose him for hours.) One of his many pairs of drumsticks or lovingly cared-for guitars was never far from his reach.

He is survived by his son, Nick (Sarah Arcos) Strayer; parents James (Bobbe)

Strayer and Delores Clements; and siblings, Lad (Deborah) Strayer and Lora (Tom) Maddox.

Following Ross' wishes, cremation will take place with no formal services.

Memorial contributions can be made to the WCC's foundation (<https://www.wccnet.edu/foundation/>) and put "in honor of" as "Ross Strayer".

Arrangements have been entrusted to Wagley Funeral Home, in Adrian, where online condolences and memories may be shared at www.wagleyfuneralhomes.com.

Tribute Wall



Jim
Kelly

“ Ross!

News of your passing was a shock to my system. Like falling into a time machine. I was instantly hurled back to Garfield Elementary 4th grade where we used to play marbles in the dirt at recess near the gym door. Next thing ya know, we were both avid comic book readers - Superman, Archie, and of course Spiderman, and the Batman. I'd look over at you in some classroom, and you'd show me your detailed sketch of The Incredible Hulk! You were brave enough to stay overnight a few times at the Kelly house. Ping pong and bumper pool were big back then. And I remember being at the Adrian Elks Club with my folks when you were dolled-up in a suit and tie playing drums with the local pick-up band for Frank Sinatra, Jr. So cool to see you tearing it up! Our carousing and exploits were legendary; especially with the neighborhood friends Jimmy Aldrich, Mike Jarboe, and Mitchy Sell. And of course as foolhardy and spirited Adrian High classmates through 1974. And then we all went out on our own! Man, I had not seen you until 37 years later, when you showed for my literary talk at the Crosswell Tea Room! Wow! You and Gordy Sharpe both came! What a treat that was! We got to play catch-up! And it was the last time we were together. But I do remember leaving you laughing!

It was very sad, and yet wonderful to read the obit your family generated. You lived a richly rewarding life as a family man, musician, and educator. I'm sure you were a mentor for many. My heart breaks for your family members, bro. You are truly one of the best. Until we meet again . . .

(Jim Kelly - Vero Beach)

Jim Kelly - October 22, 2025 at 10:32 PM

OM

“ I first took Biology 101 at WCC with Mr. Ross Strayer about 13 years ago. It was an eye-opening class, and the only option for me as a working person that was interested in becoming a doctor. Now over 1 decade later, that first class was the impetus for me to pursue medicine, and I am now a final-year internal medicine resident physician. Thank you so much for imparting your knowledge. I still have all the class notes! What a nice teacher.

Omi - December 05, 2024 at 08:15 PM

SA

“ Ross was the kind of person we should all aspire to be like. I admired him deeply. I know this world is hard and painful for us all at times. Ross experienced plenty of pain and loss in his life, but he never let it harden his heart. He remained open, kind, generous, and loving. He transformed his pain into compassion and used that compassion to make the world a better place. I am a better person for knowing and loving him.

He loved deeply and truly. He loved his son most of all. More than anything in the universe. He loved his parents. He loved to make people happy- I think that was why he constantly filled any room he entered with laughter. He had such an incredible beauty and innocence about him. He had an awe and appreciation for life and nature. No one made me happier than he did. I have and will always cherish the time we shared together.

Sarah Ansari - April 09, 2023 at 11:21 PM



“ Ross James Strayer

January 28, 2023 at 12:24 PM

DR

“ I was on the same Maple League baseball team that Ross was on in the summer of 1969, Krieghoff-Lenawee. Ross was a year younger than me and my Dad was the coach. I remember how happy I was the night Dad went to the "13 year old draft" that took place each year, when players moved from Little League into Maple League, to learn that he had drafted Ross onto the team. We became batting practice buddies that summer, spending hours and hours at the Garfield School playground, pitching to each other and taking turns hitting. We both hit quite well in league games, which was a redemption of sorts for me because I had developed a nasty uppercut swing the summer before playing "fun-ball home run derby" with Ross's brother, Lad. I went from leading the league in strikeouts (as a batter, not a pitcher) one year, to playing fairly decent baseball the next, thanks to Ross. We also went from being batting-practice buddies to being pretty close friends outside of baseball for a few years after that.. He was exactly as everyone on this site has described him--"funny", "kind", and "laid-back." Of my friends from long ago, I put Ross at the top of the list. Though the news of his passing saddens me, I take heart to see that he touched so many other lives in the same way that he touched mine. To Ross's family, you are very much in my thoughts and prayers.

David Rink - December 15, 2022 at 12:11 PM

DD

“ I am deeply saddened by this news. Sending thoughts to you Jim, and the rest of your family. Deborah (Patterson) Davis

Deborah Davis - December 14, 2022 at 11:31 AM

JS

Debbie

This is a reply from Ross's Dad. I was so happy to see it. If you remember me I would Like to hear from you. send a text, 386-999-1020.

Jim Strayer - February 14, 2023 at 03:23 PM

LF

“ Simply a wonderful person & I will miss seeing him traversing the LA building hallways & Life Science Core area. When interacting with Ross', his smile & interest in science always made my day so much better.

Lee Foley

Lee Foley - December 12, 2022 at 10:13 PM

SU

“ I first met Ross in the mid '90's. It seemed like everyone I knew at Eastern knew of Ross Strayer. He was legendary for his teaching, musicianship, and humor. I got to know Ross through the Life Science Department at WCC. He was always kind, always curious about everything, and always incredibly funny. David Shier, Ross and I used to meet up at Arbor Brewing Company to learn about physics together which was a subject that we all felt we wanted to understand a little better. We had such great conversations and laughs. I will miss Ross along with so many faculty and students. RIP Ross. Keep on telling jokes and playing guitar&drums on the other side.



Susan - December 12, 2022 at 06:22 PM

LC

“ I met Ross just before 5th grade and we remained close friends into our 30's, when life took us in separate directions and we fell out of touch. Nevertheless, he came to mind often over the years...and always will. Ross, as others have said, was kind, gentle, humorous, talented, creative, patient, giving, joyful...and more. He was such a wise soul. Even as a kid in high school, he was reading Kahlil Gibran and Ram Dass, and taking their philosophies to heart. I learned so much from Ross. A person couldn't ask for a truer friend. I am deeply saddened by his loss. I am forever grateful for his friendship.



Laura Cover - December 11, 2022 at 10:12 PM



What a great picture and lovely memory of Ross....:) he was indeed all that

Annika Kostrubala - December 12, 2022 at 12:12 PM

LC

“ 1 file added to the album Ross at WCC



Laura Cover - December 11, 2022 at 10:00 PM

LV

“ Ross was a great friend and neighbor when we both lived on Bent Oak Highway. You will be missed my friend.

Laura VanSickle - December 11, 2022 at 05:17 PM

KK

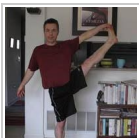
“ I was working for Jim Strayer (and Esta Grossman) when Jim brought Ross on as a part timer in the biology department. During Rosses first semesters working at WCC I had the pleasure and now fond memories of blazing and maintaining trails in the woods around WCC campus with Ross.
May Ross Stayer's name be for a blessing
Keith Kurz

Keith Kurz - December 11, 2022 at 04:11 PM

CE

“ Ross was an awesome longtime friend to both myself and my husband. He would often come to Grand Rapids to stay with us for weekends. I would wake up at 2 or 3 in the morning hearing them laughing and playing music together. He felt more like family than a friend to us! My heart is broken for his family as well as myself. RIP Ross Strayer.

Cindy Emmert - December 11, 2022 at 12:10 PM



“ I worked with Ross for 20 years at Washtenaw Community College. What a great guy. A good man with a good heart who touched many lives.

My condolences to all who knew and loved Ross.

-Rick Cocco

Rick Cocco - December 10, 2022 at 05:21 PM

DW

“ Ross was a friend, colleague, biologist, teacher, musician, and comedian to many of us. He showed us how to have a curiosity for the natural world, how to engage people in a kind and playful way, how to contribute without the need for recognition, and how to have fun while doing it all! He was the first person I met when I got my job at WCC, he went with me to get my first guitar, he joined me on many hikes, and made me laugh every time he graced my office doorway. Good journey and good biology my friend, I will miss you dearly.

David Wooten

David Wooten - December 10, 2022 at 03:56 PM

DZ

“ Ross had a huge impact on how I work in the classroom. He was my first college Bio instructor years ago, then a colleague years later. I am so glad I got to know him a bit in both of those contexts. I will miss our fun conversations and sharing those laughs.

Drew Zemper - December 10, 2022 at 01:53 PM

JM

“ I had the pleasure of working with Ross for a few years as a part time instructor in the Biology Department. Ross always made me feel welcome, and was always available to discuss various aspects of the course I was learning to teach. Wonderful human being.

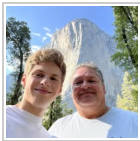
Jef McNally - December 10, 2022 at 11:50 AM

BS

“ *Memories from 1974! Rest in peace Ross!*



Barb Switalski - December 10, 2022 at 09:09 AM



“ *Joseph Nunez lit a candle in memory of Ross Strayer*



Joseph Nunez - December 09, 2022 at 09:30 PM

MA

“ *He was a FANTASTIC teacher! His class was one of my first ones at WCC in 2017. He was so patient and willing to explain any concept until we understood it. He even let the nerds stay later in lab to look at parameciums and make more slides until his next lab started... He made learning such a joy!!!! God Bless you and kept you Mr. Strayer❤️*

mary - December 09, 2022 at 08:07 PM

DT

“ *Ross was a student of mine and it was clear he had the potential to be a great science teacher. We had great conversation and outdoor fun. We will miss you my friend.*

Dave Thomas - December 09, 2022 at 05:04 PM

EP

“ Ross was my colleague in the Biology Department for over 12 years. He was well-loved and kind. His BIO 101 lab book was charming and funny, just like him.

He will be sorely missed.

-Emily Thompson

Emily Thompson, Ph.D. - December 09, 2022 at 04:24 PM

DA

“ 3 files added to the album Ross at WCC



Dale - December 09, 2022 at 03:47 PM

NS

These are wonderful. Thank you so much for posting!
- Nick Strayer

Nick Strayer - December 09, 2022 at 04:32 PM

FE

“ Fellow Employee lit a candle in memory of Ross Strayer



Fellow Employee - December 09, 2022 at 03:43 PM

FE

“ *Fellow Employee sent a virtual gift in memory of Ross Strayer*



Fellow Employee - December 09, 2022 at 03:42 PM

FE

“ *Fellow Employee sent a virtual gift in memory of Ross Strayer*



Fellow Employee - December 09, 2022 at 03:41 PM

AH

“ *I was in the biology department with Ross - he was the funniest guy ever, and had a very deep love of the natural world. He inspired many students to see the world in a new way. Man...we will really miss him.*

Anne Heise - December 09, 2022 at 03:36 PM