



## Melton James Darden

April 28, 1954 - April 25, 2025

IN MEMORY OF:

Melton James Darden

Serving Location:

CRAIN FUNERAL HOME – ANNA

135 West Vienna Street, Anna, Illinois

Melton James Darden finished his work here on earth on Friday, April 25, 2025.

James was born in Los Angeles, California on April 28, 1954, but grew up in Alma, Arkansas. He graduated in 1973 from Alma High School and later completed a bachelor degree from Ouachita Baptist University and a Masters in Leadership from Central Christian University.

He worked four years at the fort Smith Christian Academy and then moved to Illinois in 1982 to serve as Principal of Ezra Christian School for 11 years. While there he taught and coach basketball (leading his teams to winning multiple tournaments). James was instrumental in starting a girls volleyball team and started an Interschool basketball league for grades 1-7.

In 1994 he began his employment at Shawnee Community College and developed the alternative high school program. He was promoted to Director of Adult Education and Alternative Instruction. In this position he spoke at several regional and state conferences and was recognized as the Illinois Adult Education Director of the Year. He then earned the title of Dean of Adult Education and Alternative Instruction and grew the adult education program to a maximum credit hour of 7500. He also served nine years on the Southern Illinois Workforce Development Board.

James loved his work with the alternative high school program and acknowledged that students would accept you for who you were when you accepted them for who they were and worked with them toward successful completion of their work. He enjoyed seeing when the academic light came on that excelled them through the program.

After retirement, he was appointed and elected to the Shawnee College Board of Trustees and served four years as the Board's liaison to the Illinois Community College Trustees Association.

James loved the Lord and the opportunity to preach and teach about Jesus. He tried to obey the Holy Spirit and tell "his story" of a personal encounter with the Lord because he knew it could be the difference of Heaven or hell to the listeners. Whether talking to 1 or 101, he took time to be a witness for Jesus.

James is survived by his wife, Beth and they loved spending time with their grandchildren, traveling, gardening, and living life thru adventures. He was a proud father to two sons, Daniel and Andrew and grandfather to seven (Zach, Emily, Georgia Claire, Remi, Reese, Lucas, and Landry. He also survived by two brothers Mickey (Judy) Darden and Daryl (Connie Darden and their families all of Arkansas.

James was preceded in death by his mother, Jacqueline Avery Reeves, sister, Romona Hobbs, daughter-in-law, Denise Wilson Darden, and grandson, Zachary Douglas.

Acts 20:24 (NIV) However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me – the task of testifying to the good news of God’s amazing grace.

To everyone who prayed and sent words of encouragement – your prayers and kindness have carried me and refreshed my soul. Thank you!

Visitation will be Tuesday, Apr. 29, from 4:00 PM to 7:00 PM at Grange Hall Free Will Baptist Church, 9950 Grassy Rd, Marion, IL 62959. Funeral Services will follow the Visitation at the church at 7:00 PM with Rev. Kevin McNeely officiating.

Inurnment will be held a later date at Cypress Cemetery.

Memorials may be made to Barnes-Jewish Transplant Foundation, 1001 Highland Plaza Dr. Ste 140, St. Louis, MO 63110; Grange Hall Free Will Baptist Church Youth Group, 9950 Grassy Road, Marion, IL 62959; Ramps for Christ, (check payable to Lone Oak Laborers), c/o Dick Smith, 17706 Corinth Road, Marion, IL 62959; or Shawnee Community College Adult Education Program, SCC Foundation (Adult Education Programs), 8364 Shawnee College Road, Ullin, IL 62992. Memorial contribution envelopes will be available at the church service.

Crain Funeral Home in Anna, Illinois is in charge of arrangements.

# Cemetery Details

**Cypress Cemetery**

## Previous Events

### Visitation

APR **29**. 4:00 PM - 7:00 PM (CT)

Grange Hall Free Will Baptist Church  
9950 Grassy Road  
Marion , IL 62959

### Funeral Service

APR **29**. 7:00 PM - 8:00 PM (CT)

Grange Hall Free Will Baptist Church  
9950 Grassy Road  
Marion , IL 62959

# Tribute Wall



“ *Divine Peace Bouquet was purchased for the family of Melton James Darden.* ”



April 29, 2025 at 08:49 AM



“ *I will forever thank God for putting our two families together on this journey. Heaven gained two amazing angels. May you find comfort in knowing that you are loved.* ”

**Robert McGuire** - April 29, 2025 at 08:26 AM



“ *Brian Durham & Jennifer Foster purchased the Arrive in Style for the family of Melton James Darden.* ”



**Brian Durham & Jennifer Foster** - April 28, 2025 at 12:26 PM



“ *Your SCC Adult Education Family purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Melton James Darden.* ”



**Your SCC Adult Education Family** - April 28, 2025 at 12:10 PM

CG

“ Our thoughts and prayers are with you Beth, Andrew, and all the family.



Carol & Randy George - April 28, 2025 at 11:41 AM

CP

“ Coad Toyota Paducah purchased the Serene Retreat for the family of Melton James Darden.



Coad Toyota Paducah - April 28, 2025 at 11:24 AM



“ Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Melton James Darden.



April 28, 2025 at 10:55 AM



“ Beautiful Dreams was purchased for the family of Melton James Darden.



April 28, 2025 at 08:11 AM

TS

“ I have many fond memories of Melton as we shared classes together at Alma High School. It was wonderful to read in his obituary of the witness and impact he had on so many through his career in education. Well done good and faithful servant Melton, May you rest in peace with our Creator, Lord and Redeemer.  
Theresa Domerese Spragins.

Theresa Domerese Spragins - April 27, 2025 at 09:14 PM

DD

“ Daryl and Connie Darden purchased the Enduring Grace for the family of Melton James Darden.



Daryl and Connie Darden - April 26, 2025 at 06:42 PM



“ Rose Remembrance was purchased for the family of Melton James Darden.



April 26, 2025 at 06:21 PM