



## **Rick Kirkland**

It is with deep sadness to report that Rick Kirkland, 66, passed away on November 29, 2023, in his home. Rick was born in Batesburg, SC and raised by his grandparents, the late Cleo Padgett Kirkland Kneece and her husband, John Kneece. His early life in Batesburg was formative; these were the years where he developed his love for music. That love for music included his self-taught love of the piano and his love for singing. As a teenager he was honored to sing and tour with the Presbyterian Youth Choir. A born leader, he graduated from Batesburg-Leesville High School in 1975 as the Senior Class President. Rick left Batesburg and moved to Columbia to attend the University of South Carolina and he never looked back.

While at USC, Rick excelled academically and continued his passion for singing by joining the acclaimed vocal group and USC's musical ambassadors, Carolina Alive. During his time with Carolina Alive, he travelled and sang throughout the United States, Mexico, and the Middle East.

After graduating in 1979, Rick began his professional career as an Information Technology Specialist at the former SCE&G (now known as Dominion Energy). During his tenure, that lasted over 40 years, he was an integral member of the technology team that designed the company's first mainframe system. He went on to co-chair two international conferences and was awarded the "Soaring Eagle" award granted to the top employees of the entire organization. Always looking to improve his communication skills, Rick joined the company sponsored chapter of Toastmasters International. His leadership skills would be used when he became a state-wide leader. His record of winning many competitions lead to him being awarded the "Toastmaster of the Decade" award.

His love for the arts was further nourished by participating in numerous local stage productions at Town Theater, Workshop Theater, and Village Square. He joined Palmetto Mastersingers, the self-proclaimed, "South Carolina's Musical Ambassadors," where he travelled and sang extensively throughout the southeast. Rick was also a member of Shandon United Methodist Church where, for several years, he was the keyboardist for the contemporary service band, "Life Line".

Ralph Waldo Emerson is credited with saying “The only way to have a friend is to be one.” and Rick certainly had many friends. He loved helping people with everything from weekend building projects, such as building decks and arbors, to troubleshooting computer issues.

To know Rick is to know that he was a fierce advocate for LGBTQ+ issues. You just had to check the stickers on his vehicle or the jewelry he often wore to know he was out and proud.

Rick had some little lesser-known talents. He began cross-stitching early in his life and even earned a Blue Ribbon at the State Fair. He mastered the double side cross stitch, where the front and back mirror each other. He also had a talent and love for stain glass. Anyone visiting his home has seen his work hanging in the window.

As much as Rick loved to travel, and he did extensively, he found comfort in sitting at home watching television. Programs varied from educational to television dramas. He also loved Sci-Fi, as shown by his extensive collection of DVDs. An avid reader, he adored his eReader. Vacations always included packing his eReader.

Rick’s final wish was to make people laugh. He accomplished that often with his wonderful sense of humor, sometimes subtle sarcasm, and his infectious smile. He particularly loved playing practical jokes.

Surviving to mourn his loss is his brother Rev. Todd Kirkland (Cathy); sister, Bridget Havird (Rick); and his husband of 43 years, Clift Shealy and their two cats, Coleman and Paddington.

A Celebration of Life service for Rick Kirkland will be held at 3:00 PM, Sunday, December 10, 2023, at the Chapel of Thompson Funeral Home of Lexington, 4720 Augusta Road, Lexington, SC 29072. Pastors Mark Payne and Steven Robinson will officiate. Rick's Celebration Service will be webcast for those unable to attend through the following link: <https://client.tribucast.com/tcid/1471911285>. The family will greet friends for one hour prior to the service (2:00 PM - 3:00 PM) at Thompson Funeral Home of Lexington. Interment will be private.