



John Richard Manning

December 6, 1949 - February 22, 2026

"Yesterday's gone on down the river, and you can't get it back." — Gus McCrae

John Richard Manning, age 76, of Forrest City, Arkansas, passed away peacefully at Encompass Rehabilitation Hospital in Jonesboro, AR. on February 22, 2026. He was a beloved husband, father, grandfather, and a leader whose legacy will be felt for generations.

John Richard Manning was born on December 6, 1949, to George and Evelyn Manning in Memphis, TN. A natural leader with a tireless work ethic, John dedicated his professional life to education. A 1967 graduate of Humes High School in Memphis, TN, he went on to play football on a scholarship at Harding University, carrying that athletic discipline into his career as a talented administrator. He was a lifelong learner, pursuing his MSE plus 30 until his advisor finally told him he had to either enroll in a doctoral program or stop enrolling—a testament to his constant drive to grow and learn.

Despite his many professional titles—coach, teacher, high school principal, school superintendent, and Director of the Crowley's Ridge Educational Co-op—he remained a deeply humble man. Whenever someone asked what he did for a living, his answer was always the same: "Teacher." He didn't just manage schools; he built environments where others could thrive, fueled by a creative yet stern spirit that let him see the potential in everyone.

Beyond his professional achievements, John was a man of rhythm and words. He was a gifted storyteller who could turn a simple memory into a vivid

journey, and his deep love of music provided the soundtrack to his life. Whether he was listening to his favorite records or sharing a tale with friends, he lived with a vibrant, creative soul.

When he wasn't enjoying tinkering with a project, watching sports, or holding court with a story, he found peace in the soil of his garden. To John, tending his garden was another form of his creative expression—a place where his patience, storytelling, and hard work yielded tangible beauty.

Mr. Manning is survived by his devoted wife of 25 years, Judy Manning, three daughters Mica Manning Morales (Zach), Stacy Sutton Collins (Lee), and Anna Catherine Sutton, one son Morgan Richard Manning (Kristen), one sister Jo Evelyn Findley of Nashville, TN, and his cherished grandchildren, Miles Manning, Marin Manning, McKenna Morales, Mitchell Morales, and Hunter Owen Pugh.

He was preceded in death by his parents, George Manning and Evelyn Massey Manning, and one brother Steve Manning.

A visitation for Mr. Manning will be held Saturday, March 7, 2026 from 10:00 a.m till 11:00 a.m. A celebration of life will follow from 11:00 a.m. till 12:00 p.m. at Stevens Funeral Home . Stevens Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements. You may log on to stevensfuneralhome.net for the online registry.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made to First Baptist Church and First United Methodist Church in Forrest City, or any scholarship of choice in his honor.

Previous Events

Visitation

MAR 7. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (CT)

Stevens Funeral Home
220 North Washington
Forrest City, AR 72335
(870) 633-5400
info@stevensfuneralhome.net
<https://www.stevensfuneralhome.net/>

Celebration Of Life

MAR 7. 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM (CT)

Stevens Funeral Home
220 North Washington
Forrest City, AR 72335
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Tribute Wall

TM

“ John helped Larry built a fort in our backyard when the kids were little that’s still standing and in use today. He had a knack for designing and creating and was always ready to lend a tool or helping hand when the need arose. Those two problem-solved, shot the bull and developed a strong friendship that lasted and served them well.

Mica and Katie and Morgan and Scott have tales and memories from growing up with two fathers in the school business that helped mold them into the adults they turned out to be I’m sure. They were blessed to have such a fine example like John Manning in their lives. He will not be forgotten!

Teresa McCain - March 05 at 08:32 AM

CC

“ Crowley’s Ridge Educational Cooperative purchased the Sentiments of Serenity Spray for the family of John Richard Manning.



Crowley’s Ridge Educational Cooperative - March 02 at 11:08 AM

CC

“ Crowley’s Ridge Educational Cooperative planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of John Richard Manning.

Crowley’s Ridge Educational Cooperative - March 02 at 11:08 AM

MM

“ John was so good to my daughters when they were at West Jr. High with him. My thoughts and prayers to Mica and Morgan and the rest of his family.

Margie McCain - March 01 at 04:38 PM

BL

“ In your life, your lucky if you get to know someone like John Manning, they are different then others you know, and in a wonderful way. I am proud to say that John was a dear friend of mine. I am so sorry for Judy and his entire family. Anyone who knew John well, lost a special friend when he passed. Barry Lumpkin

Barry Lumpkin - February 27 at 06:06 PM

LW

“ Mr. Manning helped shape and affect so many young lives. Including my own. He gave me the keys to the gym many times to work on my basketball game. But still paddled me and Bill for drinking Sunkists in class, so I didn't get too "special". A great story teller with quips & phrases we still use today. "Eat ya meal. Chew ya fat outside," while rushing the lunch crowd in and out of the cafeteria. Our Prayers go out to the Manning family. 🙏🙏🙏

Larry Shane Waldrop - February 27 at 01:20 PM

JT

“ Judy and children. I am so sorry to hear of John's passing. I worked in the Special Ed Dept. in the Forrest City. He was always smiling and yes he could tell you some stories and have everyone in stitches. I enjoyed working with him as did so many. You and the family will be in my prayers.



Joann Thompson - February 24 at 01:02 AM