Jay Laurence Finkelstein

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Jay Laurence Finkelstein died of a coronary on Jan. 7, 2014 while sending out jokes to a long list of friends on his computer.

A memorial service in his honor will be held on March 30 at 2 p.m. at 121 E. South at the Groff Memorial Library; there will be a planting of maple trees, music, and a sharing of what people remember best about him.

Jay was born in Brooklyn, New York on March 26, 1938. His family later moved from New York to Connecticut to Florida, where he attended Miami High School, and later went on to Rice Institute/University in Houston, Texas. During his working life as an aerospace engineer, he was involved as a civilian employee of the U.S. Navy in virtually every aspect of its space program. In fact, he began working on Navy space projects in the summer of 1960, when he was invited to visit the California Naval Air Station facility at Point Mugu between receiving his B.A. in engineering from the Rice Institute and his B.S. the following year from the Rice University. He was always amused by having degrees on his office wall from both versions of his favorite school, alongside one from Cal Tech, where student pranks reigned supreme while he was attending.

Jay met his future wife, Honora "Honey" Moore in 1960 at Rice. He had a tremendous sense of humor, and she has often thought that if he hadn't been a successful space engineer, he would have loved to be a Jewish comedian in the Catskills, as he valued both his Jewish heritage and his outrageous sense of the comedy of life.

He and Honora were married in 1980, a union that also brought him her three daughters, Aileen, Kathleen, and Bridget Lynch, all of whom he treated as his own, and in 1981 their son Michael. To this day, all of the girls give him credit for teaching them math and how to drive, while Mike inherited an eidetic memory from his dad. Jay is also survived by five male grandchildren: Robin and Ryan Ingram, Lionel and Tiernan McCulloch, and Kevin Phillips.

During the early 1990s when Honora produced and hosted a cable TV talk show in Northern Virginia, Jay learned how to light the sets and came along to the studio, just for fun. And by the time Jay officially retired seven years ago, Honora had found the property in Grayville where she could do workshops in writing and metaphysics, so he bought the house next door to use as his office, where he worked long-distance monitoring the data from the last space project he had helped launch.

An avid reader, he also became a long-term volunteer on the local library board, and was known affectionately as "the little guy."