



James L. Harris

April 21, 1941 - May 29, 2026

James L. Harris, PhD, passed away peacefully on May 29, 2026 in Austin, TX, surrounded by family and caregivers from the Silverado Memory Care Community and hospice. Jim was 85 years old.

Born in 1941 to William H. and Mary Harris of Jonesboro, LA., Jim moved often as a young child as his father was a U.S. Navy officer. In his teen years, the family settled in Houston where Jim graduated from Spring Branch High School. He then attended the University of Texas at Austin where he earned a bachelor's degree in microbiology. Afterwards, he spent a year working as a microbiologist under a U.S. Air Force contract with Southwest Research Institute in San Antonio. Subsequently, Jim completed graduate degrees, M.A. and PhD, from Texas A&M University while performing research in the lab of the late Dr. Willard A. Taber.

A teacher by nature, Jim held professorships alongside esteemed colleagues in the areas of biology and microbiology at several universities between 1974-1984: University of Georgia, Athens (with the late Dr. Ivan L. Roth); The University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown (with Dr. Halkard Mackey); The University of Texas at Austin (with Dr. Paul J. Szaniszlo). Between 1984-2008, Jim was employed by the Texas Department of State Health Services where he worked closely with the National Laboratory Training Network (NLTN) to facilitate and conduct numerous mycology workshops and training activities

across the country and internationally. Additionally, Dr. Harris remained an adjunct professor of microbiology for many years at the University of Texas at Austin.

In retirement, he enjoyed time with his family, his garden, home renovations, and travel. He was dearly loved and will always be remembered as a good-humored and gentle nurturer. Jim is survived by his wife of 56 years, Catherine, their daughter Mary Helen Harris Acosta, her husband, Michael, and grand-daughter Anna Beth Acosta, all of Austin.