



James "Hoss" Morgan

May 18, 1955 - May 14, 2025

James "Hoss" Morgan, 69, Lakeland, Florida - May 14, 2025 Some men pass through this world unnoticed. And then there is James "Hoss" Morgan, who came barreling through life, unforgettable, leaving laughter, legacy, and an unbeatable sense of purpose throughout his life.

Born May 18, 1955, in Lakeland, Florida, to James Lovell and Mary Nell Morgan, Hoss, grew up under the southern sun, with his brother Ashley. Lakeland was not just home; it was a proving ground for his energy, his grit, and that charm that would soften the toughest skeptics.

His passion for plants would take him from Kathleen High School's Class of 1973 to Polk Vo-Tech for Ornamental Horticulture and Turf Grass Management, and finally to a B.S. in Horticulture and Citrus from Florida Southern College in 1978. In 1976, he married Gail Anita Stewart at Ardella Baptist Church, a union that felt less like a ceremony and more like the perfect arrangement.

Their love was rooted in faith and a shared fondness for their two sons: Matthew James and Kyle Stewart. To Hoss, fatherhood was the most wonderful part of his life, where he watered his children with wisdom and a heavy dose of dad jokes, and watched them grow to become Eagle Scouts.

Fondest memories are when Kyle came home from the hospital, and the world stopped, something Hoss rarely did. With Morgan Bros, there was constant energy and excitement and stories and creativity to make things work. As Matthew put it, "Dad pulling out all the stops at the end of Morgan Bros to make people whole that he had grown up with (take care of the community), the blood and sweat dad put in to make it through the tough years of spraying nights and making ends meet."

"All the love and support he poured into the Scouts, but never pressure for playing sports, constant awe of our education and career journeys (I texted with him weekly on travels and deals, always curious), and his never-ending curiosity to discuss/learn/understand/debate anything and everything. But above all, his devotion to family. Oh...and his verbal sparring matches with Rufus when Rufus figured out our dad would wake up at 4:30 am, so Rufus would bark outside his window at 4:15," said Matthew.

On the job, he was a force, a proven winner in every sense of the word. Starting as CEO of Morgan Brothers, he later anchored himself at Wm. G. Roe and Sons, Inc., where he spent 34 years climbing the ranks to become Procurement Director and Senior Management. His colleagues knew him as the man who would make the impossible shipment appear from thin air.

But if you asked around, what made Hoss truly and widely recognized was not his resume. It was his presence. Whether serving as Scoutmaster for Troop 704 or winning the Florida Farm Bureau's Young Farmer & Rancher Discussion Meet, he moved with a kind of confident humility, a rare blend of get-it-done grit and a laugh that would turn bad days on their head.

His accolades were many: American Farmer Degree from FFA, Outstanding Horticulture Awards, leadership honors from the Boy Scouts, and countless nods from industry insiders. But ask his sons about his proudest

achievements, and you will never hear about trophies. You will discover the time he made grandma cuss in laughter, the nights spent quoting Star Wars around a campfire, and the ridiculous science projects involving tropical plants that should not survive Florida's climate, but somehow thrived under Hoss's stubborn care.

He was a movie-quote machine. If you spent five minutes with him, you were bound to hear lines from Terminator or Star Trek, as if Arnold Schwarzenegger and Captain Kirk were lifelong fishing buddies. He did not just drop quotes, he lived them. "Come with me if you want to live," might have been his way of inviting you to help clean the grill.

Yet, amidst all the humor and hands-in-the-dirt determination, there was a kind of sacred rhythm to his life. Whether casting a line in Charlotte Harbor or mentoring a scout through merit badges, his message was always clear: "Life matters more when you pour yourself into others." This was not just something he said; he lived it.

Hoss did not just grow plants. He grew people. Future Farmers of America, National 4-H, and the Boy Scouts all became fertile ground for his guidance. To children, he was a gravitational force. He could be going 90 miles per hour, managing shipments, or grilling steaks, but if a kid tugged his sleeve, he would immediately stop, eyes locked in, fully present.

And yet, perhaps the most telling marker of James "Hoss" Morgan's impact was not found in accolades or professional milestones, but in the dozens and dozens of lives he quietly changed. He was the man who showed up. Every time. Early to meetings, last to leave. He would hand you a cold soda before you even realized you were thirsty.

He was that rare kind of person who made you feel like you belonged, even when you did not know where you fit. His backyard was a living laboratory, a strange fusion of Eden and tool shed chaos. He would spend hours out there, coaxing seedlings into marvels, yelling out quotes from Indiana Jones or The Princess Bride while grilling slabs of meat with the intensity of a man auditioning for Top Chef: Florida Dad Edition.

And people came. Neighbors, colleagues, scouts, old classmates. His grill became a pulpit, his porch the front row. In re-planting, what did not take root the first time, he believed in second chances. In giving time to things that most people overlook. And maybe that is why people trusted him so easily, he never just saw your potential, he acted like it was already blooming.

Even when you did not believe in yourself, Hoss did. During hard times, he did not disappear; he leaned in. When someone was grieving, he did not send flowers; he showed up with tools, a shovel, and a plan to build something. His grief was expressed in action, his love in presence.

You always knew where he stood because he was right there, shoulder to shoulder, hands in the dirt with you. James "Hoss" Morgan was not just a man. He was a movement. A widely respected blueprint of what it means to live richly, laugh loudly, and love without limits.

As he aged, Hoss remained the same, a relentless cultivator, forever tinkering with his garden, experimenting with heirloom tomatoes, or coaxing stubborn flowers to bloom in defiance of the Florida sun. He was the kind of man who saw growth not as a process but a promise.

Toward the end, 4 days shy of his 70th birthday, silence showed up; a remarkable man's time had come. The legacy of what it genuinely takes to serve left both a tangible ache with family and friends, and a most impactful

blueprint of how to live with non-stop purpose.

He is survived by his wife, Gail Anita Morgan of Lakeland, and their sons: Matthew (Kali) Morgan of Glenwood, MD, and Kyle (Elizabeth) Morgan of Lakeland. He leaves behind his granddaughter, Charlotte Morgan, who shares his love of fishing. His father, James Lovell Morgan, survives him as well, along with cousins, nieces, nephews, and in-laws, each carrying a piece of Hoss's spirit with them.

He was preceded in death by his beloved mother, Mary Nell, and brother Ashley. And though he did not talk much about heaven, you can be sure if there is a garden gate up there, Hoss is already oiling any squeaky hinges.

A visitation will be held on May 23rd from 5-7 PM at Gentry-Morrison Funeral Home on Bartow Road in Lakeland. Services will follow on May 24th at 10:30 AM, same place. Hoss will be laid to rest at Springhead Cemetery, under an oak tree.

In place of flowers, donations may be made to the Michael J. Fox Foundation or the Boy Scouts of America, both causes Hoss championed with unwavering devotion. Special thanks are due to Wm. G. Roe and Sons, Inc., where Hoss built not just a career, but a second family.

Previous Events

Visitation

MAY **23.** 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM (ET)

Gentry-Morrison Funeral Homes - Southside Chapel
1727 Bartow Road
Lakeland, FL 33801
(863) 688-7679
t.hall@gentry-morrison.com
<https://www.gentry-morrison.com/>

Funeral Service

MAY **24.** 10:30 AM (ET)

Gentry-Morrison Funeral Homes - Southside Chapel
1727 Bartow Road
Lakeland, FL 33801
(863) 688-7679
t.hall@gentry-morrison.com
<https://www.gentry-morrison.com/>

Tribute Wall



“ Gentry-Morrison Funeral Homes created a Tribute Video in memory of James "Hoss" Morgan



Gentry-Morrison Funeral Homes - May 22, 2025 at 08:24 AM

RS

Hoss was a stand up man! I was lucky to be a part of troop 704 while he was our scout leader. I'll never forget his laugh and his enthusiasm for scouting. One of my fondest memories is the camping trips to the orange groves where we got to fish all day and had a big fish fry that night. On the morning of the big day he would wake everyone up blasting music from his truck. The boys would wake up ready to fish! Thank you for the memories Hoss you will be missed!

Ryan Strickler - May 24, 2025 at 11:46 AM



“ Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of James "Hoss" Morgan.



May 30, 2025 at 10:28 AM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of James "Hoss" Morgan.*



May 23, 2025 at 02:12 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of James "Hoss" Morgan.

May 23, 2025 at 02:12 PM



“ *Our family served along Hoss for a few years at Boy Scouts. We have so many great memories of meetings and camping. He was a joy to be around. One of my favorite funny memories was sleeping in the car while camping because Hoss and all the dads were snoring so loud in surround sound!! Our fishing trips were the best. I will miss running into him at Publix. He was a giant presence! Love and prayers from Terry and Bev Fox.*

Terry and Bev Fox - May 23, 2025 at 10:38 AM



“ *Hoss was a special cousin to me. Didn't see each other much, but when we did it was like no time had passed since we last saw each other. It meant so much to me that he came to my husband's funeral last year. Rest it peace, beloved cousin. ❤️💔🙏*

Carol Glave - May 22, 2025 at 04:39 PM