



## James Taylor Buckley Jr

December 8, 1939 - August 10, 2025

J. Taylor Buckley Jr., one of the founding editors of USA TODAY, died Aug. 10, 2025, in Centreville, Md. after a bruising two-year brawl with a rare soft-tissue cancer. He was 85.

Buckley's career in print journalism spanned more than 40 years, beginning at The Cavalier Daily, the student newspaper of the University of Virginia, and ending at USA TODAY just as it broke through as the daily with the largest circulation in the country and when ink-on-paper journalism in general reached its zenith as an information medium.

After graduating from UVA in 1961 with a BA in economics, he covered high school sports at The Daily Local News in West Chester, Pa. He left as its city editor in 1969 to run The Chester River Press, a struggling weekly in Chestertown, Md. The struggle ended six months later when the paper folded. He found a copy-editing job at The Morning News in Wilmington, Del., where 12 years later he was named the first managing editor of both the News and the Evening Journal. In 1982 he was tapped by the Gannett Co., which owned the Wilmington papers, to be the start-up managing editor for the "Money" section of its soon-to-launch national daily, USA TODAY. He also played a key role in conceiving and laying down USA TODAY's staccato writing style, which emphasized short, fact-packed sentences. He preached "verbs" and waged war on blather and unquantifiable modifiers, loudly admonishing reporters and editors to "beat empty adjectives to death like baby seals."

Along the way, he wrote an op-ed column (titled "From The Hip," presumably

to exploit his sarcasm and unusual capacity to offend a significant percentage of readers), consulted for “USA TODAY on TV,” and for a time wrote a sports column and did broadcast sports commentary for USA TODAY Sky Radio. In 1991, shortly after the collapse of the Soviet Union, he was dispatched to Moscow by USA TODAY to open its first foreign bureau, an assignment cut short when he was assaulted by a gang of thugs. He was beaten nearly to death after being thrown down a stairwell on the Borodino Bridge. At the time he was working on a piece about the Russian mafia’s role in divvying up state assets.

In what he would refer to as the “declining years of a mediocre career,” he got the dream job of senior writer for USA TODAY, mostly picking his own topics. These ranged from the perils of study abroad and campus crime to duct tape, vanity tags and the five-gallon bucket. He did a 1,500-word cover story on dirt. He retired in 1999 and spent a year under contract working on a book with USA TODAY founder Al Neuharth. It bombed.

He was a juror for the Pulitzer Prizes, a frequent also-ran for a prize of his own, though once deemed a “legitimate contender” in the commentary category.

As a high school student in Pennsylvania, he was bow “man” in the Haverford School four-oared boat that won the national championship in 1957 and went on to become the second American schoolboy crew ever to compete in the Henley Royal Regatta in England. In 2021 he was elected to the school’s Sports Hall of Fame.

In his community, Buckley served on the vestry at Old St. Paul’s, Kent, on the board of the Sultana Education Foundation in Chestertown, Md. and on the board of the Mariner Pointe Condominium Association in Sanibel, Fla. Military service consisted of six years with the New Jersey National Guard and U.S. Army Reserve.

He was a frequent contributor to the “letters” department of The Kent County (Md.) News, leveling his caustic, tongue-in-cheek “pen” at everything from third-Bay-Bridge paranoia to the fine entertainments available while waiting in

line at the Walgreen's drive-in window.

Though he never regarded himself as much of a father, he made the obligatory attempts to teach his kids how to paddle, shoot, cast, start a fire and pluck fowl. He was ahead of his time as a fervent proponent and practitioner in the realm of renewable energy, constantly impressing upon his children this maxim: "There is no substitute for effective firewood management." He also loved to drive boats and grow large tomatoes. He had a peculiar fondness for motorcycles, Vanna White and Zelko vodka. "Straight up, no fruit." He was proudly anti-woke.

Buckley lived in Sanibel, but kept a summer home outside Chestertown. He was born in Philadelphia, the son of Kathryn Barry and J. Taylor Buckley. He is survived by his widow, Graciela Muhana; three children (from his first marriage): Jamie, of Chestertown; John (Tara), of Malvern, Pa., and Kathryn Kaiser (Cris), of Alexandria, Va., and two Argentinean stepchildren: Lucas (Natasha) and Matias Crivilone. Also, two grandchildren, Stephanie and Edward J. Kaiser.

Graveside service will be private.

In lieu of flowers, the family suggests perhaps a donation to Kent & Queen Anne's Rescue Squad, Sultana Education Foundation, Compass Regional Hospice, or any good cause of your choosing.

# Tribute Wall

CM

“ Carlos Muhana

*The same text but in English*

*What a great human being Taylor was, who went on a journey to Heaven to be with the Lord and from there continue to guide his beloved wife, Graciela (my sister), and also the children from his previous marriage.*

*Taylor departed to eternal life in peace, secure in the assurance and satisfaction of having faithfully fulfilled all his duties.*

*He was an outstanding journalist for important North American print media outlets, where he served as Editor, Director, Writer, and Proofreader, among others—the same profession as mine. It's a matter of fate.*

*I met him in Córdoba, Argentina, the city and country where I was born and reside. In May of this year, I had the enormous satisfaction of seeing him and Graciela again and spending several days together, as a special guest, on Sanibel Island and Chestertown.*

*There, I felt like a King in every sense. This came after I had visited New York and Washington and returned, after many years, to Miami and Miami Beach.*

*I would have much more to highlight about this great man, such as his intelligence, ability, simplicity, honesty, solidarity, and goodwill, but I prefer to leave it there because these are aspects that people in general have also recognized throughout his life.*

*You flew high, Taylor. Rest in peace. Surely there, in that peaceful and blessed heavenly place, we will meet again.*

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**Carlos Muhana** - August 29, 2025 at 01:11 PM

YL

“ I was fortunate to meet Taylor Buckley during the Christmas Holidays in 2021 through my friendship with his wife, Graciela. Instant admiration  
What a genuinely good natured, intelligent person I had the pleasure to get to know. Your legacy will never be forgotten among those, whose lives you have touched. Rest in peace my friend.

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**Yvette Lopez** - August 29, 2025 at 01:10 PM

CM

“ ¡Qué gran ser humano fue Taylor, quien se fue de viaje al Cielo para estar junto al Señor y desde allí seguir guiando a su amada esposa Graciela (mi hermana) y también a los hijos de su anterior matrimonio.  
Taylor partió a la vida eterna y en paz con la seguridad y satisfacción de haber cumplido fehacientemente todos los deberes. Fue un destacadísimo periodista de importantísimos Medios de comunicación gráficos norteamericanos donde se desempeñó como Editor, Director, Redactor y Corrector, entre otras, la misma profesión que las mía. Cosas del destino.  
Lo conocí en Córdoba, República Argentina, la ciudad y país donde nací y resido y en Mayo de este año tuve la enorme satisfacción de volver a verlo a él y a Graciela y compartir varios días, especialmente invitado, en Sanibel Island y Chestertown. Allí me hicieron sentir como un Rey en todo sentido. Ello después de que yo conociera New York y Washington y volviera a luego de muchos años a Miami y Miami Beach.  
Tendría mucho más para destacar de este gran hombre, como la inteligencia, capacidad, sencillez, honestidad, solidaridad, buena voluntad, pero prefieren dejarlo allí porque son aspectos que la gente en general también le ha reconocido durante toda su vida. Volaste alto Taylor. Descansa en paz. Seguramente allí, en ese tranquilo y bendecido lugar celestial nos volveremos a encontrar.  
Carlos Muhana

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**Carlos Muhana** - August 25, 2025 at 09:31 AM

CM

*Carlos Muhana*

*The same text but in English*

*Carlos Muhana*

*What a great human being Taylor was, who went on a journey to Heaven to be with the Lord and from there continue to guide his beloved wife, Graciela (my sister), and also the children from his previous marriage.*

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**Carlos Muhana** - August 29, 2025 at 12:42 PM

DE

“ *Donna Hubbard Edwards sent a virtual gift in memory of James Taylor Buckley Jr*



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**Donna Hubbard Edwards** - August 21, 2025 at 12:49 PM



“ *Nancy Coleman lit a candle in memory of James Taylor Buckley Jr*



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**Nancy Coleman** - August 18, 2025 at 09:46 PM



“ *David Walbert lit a candle in memory of James Taylor Buckley Jr*



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**David Walbert** - August 13, 2025 at 10:23 PM



“ *Rita Jackson lit a candle in memory of James Taylor Buckley Jr*



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**Rita Jackson** - August 13, 2025 at 05:25 PM



“ *Jeff and Vicky Galt*



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**Vicky Galt** - August 13, 2025 at 03:21 PM

AE

“ *Allie Elburn lit a candle in memory of James Taylor Buckley Jr*



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**Allie Elburn** - August 13, 2025 at 01:33 AM

MD

“ *Megan Dill lit a candle in memory of James Taylor Buckley Jr*



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**Megan Dill** - August 12, 2025 at 10:33 PM

PP

“ *I worked with Taylor for many years at USA Today, where he was the first managing editor of the Money section. He was a competent editor and an excellent writer, which is why we later made him a columnist. He also had a wicked sense of humor; a conversation with Taylor always left you smiling. May God bless his soul.*

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**Peter Prichard** - August 12, 2025 at 06:42 PM

TR

“ *I know I speak for all of us in The Haverford School class of 1957 when I say we have lost one of our most well rounded, loyal, and well liked friend in Taylor Buckley. He will be sorely missed at our next reunion celebration. Deepest sympathies to all the family. Ted Rauch '57*

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**Ted Rauch** - August 12, 2025 at 05:40 PM

JS

“ Jeanette Stubbs lit a candle in memory of James Taylor Buckley Jr



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**Jeanette Stubbs** - August 12, 2025 at 04:14 PM



“ Pamela Quarstein lit a candle in memory of James Taylor Buckley Jr



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**Pamela Quarstein** - August 12, 2025 at 12:34 PM

CS

“ Crystal Satterfield lit a candle in memory of James Taylor Buckley Jr



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**Crystal Satterfield** - August 12, 2025 at 12:21 PM

SF

“ Shirley Foster lit a candle in memory of James Taylor Buckley Jr



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**shirley Foster** - August 12, 2025 at 08:29 AM

DB

“ *Debra Blanchfield lit a candle in memory of James Taylor Buckley Jr*



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**Debra Blanchfield** - August 11, 2025 at 11:10 PM

DB

*Only those who truly have know him would appreciate my salute with a very, very dry Smirnoff Martini up, extra cold with no fruit.*

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**Debra Blanchfield** - August 11, 2025 at 11:12 PM

PS

“ *Patricia Sutton lit a candle in memory of James Taylor Buckley Jr*



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**Patricia Sutton** - August 11, 2025 at 09:51 PM

LP

“ *Lee Phillips lit a candle in memory of James Taylor Buckley Jr*



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**Lee Phillips** - August 11, 2025 at 06:07 PM

MC

“ *Mr. Buckley Was Like No Other Person Or Customer I Ever Had! He Owned The Greatest Sense Of Humor And We Had So Much Fun With Him! Actually Laughing Some While Writing! Rest In Piece Friend And Hope I Was Yours!* ”

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**Marion L Chance** - August 11, 2025 at 05:03 PM

DG

“ *Donna Gibbons-Neff lit a candle in memory of James Taylor Buckley Jr* ”



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**Donna Gibbons-Neff** - August 11, 2025 at 03:57 PM

DG

*Sad for the loss of an old friend. Deepest sympathy to all the family.*

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**Donna Gibbons-Neff** - August 11, 2025 at 03:59 PM

MB

*Did not know him at all but will surely miss his letters to the editor and the letters the following week from the people who did not get his humor. My thoughts are with his family.*

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**MELINDA BLYMAN** - August 17, 2025 at 12:48 PM