



Peter James Modaff Jr.

December 18, 1962 - January 6, 2026

Peter James Modaff, Jr., age 63, died in December of 2025, leaving scores of friends who recall his quick wit, his singular laugh, and his ever-present smile.

Pete, as he was known by all, was the middle child of the late Peter Sr., and the late Mary Diane Modaff.

He was born on Dec. 18, 1962, in Detroit, where his dad worked for Chrysler. The family moved to New Castle, Ind., when Pete was two, then to Indianapolis, then Kokomo, Ind., before settling back in New Castle when Pete was in fourth grade.

At New Castle Chrysler High School, Pete was a top student and a leader on the swim team. After graduation he enrolled in the journalism program at Indiana University in Bloomington, Ind., where he wrote many stories for the Indiana Daily Student newspaper and worked as managing editor and editor of the opinion page.

College friends remember his magnetic personality, his boundless curiosity, and his encyclopedic knowledge of music and pretty much everything else, including pop culture, history, current events, and so on.

Pete loved to travel and did so on his own terms. Rather than signing up for a

traditional study-abroad program, he saved his money then put his college studies on hold to spend a year backpacking across Europe.

While interning at Scripps-Howard in Washington D.C., Pete first met Rep. Phil Sharp (D-IN), his hometown Congressman. Later, while Rep. Sharp was visiting the Chrysler plant in New Castle, he was introduced to Pete's dad and asked him to extend an offer for Pete to work on his staff.

A political junkie and devoted liberal, Pete moved to D.C. in 1988 and began working on Capitol Hill as a legislative aide to Rep. Sharp. In 1995 he became legislative director to Rep. Norm Dicks (D-WA), a job he held through 2012.

"Pete was a trusted advisor to me and had both a passion and an unmatched expertise for public policy," former Rep. Dicks said. "He fought daily for the people we served. I will miss him and will never forget him; his indomitable spirit will be remembered by many."

Pete worked for Rep. Dicks until 2012, when he was hired as legislative director to Sen. Maria Cantwell (D-WA). He retired in 2017 and joined his mother at The Villages in Florida. In 2018, Sen. Cantwell coaxed Pete out of retirement and back to D.C. while she was running for re-election.

"Pete was a sharp intellect who put his skills and savvy to work helping the people of Washington for over 20 years," Sen. Cantwell said. "We will remember his keen mind, but also his warmth, great humor, and his ability to connect with everyone."

D.C. friends recall that walking with him through the corridors of Capitol Hill meant getting stopped often along the way by people eager to chat.

He was known for his talents as a speechwriter, his ability to make sense of

complicated policy, and his gift for conveying an across-the-aisle message with civility and empathy. Pete was a valued mentor to many young staffers who appreciated his patience and kindness and benefited from his wisdom and open-mindedness.

Pete leaves two sisters, Alison Stoddart (James) of West Lafayette, Ind., and Marcia Frazier of Greenfield, Ind. He also leaves five nieces and nephews and too many friends to count.

Two memorial services are planned, in Key West, Fla., Sun., March 1, and in Washington D.C., Sat., March 28. Pete was a champion for at-risk populations; his family suggests that friends who are inclined to do so donate to their local food pantries or other community organizations in his memory.

Tribute Wall

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“ *Thoughts and prayers to the Modaff family during this time of sorrow. Pete was a high school classmate.* 🙏

Mark Bates - February 04 at 08:44 PM