

Lurner Oliver Benton III

Lurner Oliver Benton, III, of Monticello, Georgia passed away peacefully on March 1, 2019, surrounded by his family. He was 76 years of age.

Mr. Benton or "Brother" as he was known in Monticello and Eatonton and "L.O." as he was known elsewhere, was born on June 5, 1942, the third child to Lurner Oliver Benton, Jr. and Margaret Tate Benton. He attended the public schools of Monticello and Oxford College of Emory University before receiving his Bachelor of Business Administration from Emory University School of Business in 1965. At Emory he was a proud member of the Kappa Alpha Order. It was also at Emory that he met the love of his life, Nancy Elizabeth Teem.

On October 9, 1965, L.O. and Nancy married. They came back to Monticello and he worked at the Farmers and Merchants Bank in Eatonton where his father was president. Unfortunately, Mr. Benton Jr. became ill and L.O. was faced with the challenge of running a significant financial institution at the early age of 32. To say that he met the challenge would be an understatement. Perceiving that size would be important with developments in the banking industry, L.O. took actions to combine Farmers and Merchants Bank with The Farmers Bank of Greene County where his family had an interest. He caused the creation of a bank holding company, Putnam-Greene Financial Corporation, and folded the two banks into one under that umbrella. He thereby took advantages of the synergies that resulted from the combination. He later added two additional banks, the Pembroke State Bank which he renamed First Bank of Coastal Georgia and The Citizens Bank of Cochran. This combination created a very successful financial group that prospered even when other community banks were struggling and failing.

At the same time L.O. was making his mark in the banking industry, he also was running a petroleum service company, Benton Oil Company, and was farming. As successful as he was in his banking endeavors, he was most happy on a tractor or his Tennessee walking horses or tending to his cows and horses. He loved to go to Waynesboro in Burke County, Georgia, the "Bird Dog Capital of the World" to see the field trials and to Shelbyville, Tennessee to see the walking horse shows. He raised both Tennessee walking horses and Black Angus cattle.

L.O. was a past member of the Board Of Counselors at Oxford College of Emory University, Piedmont Driving Club, Wade Hampton Golf Club, and the Masonic Lodge of Monticello, Georgia.

Notwithstanding the time that he spent in business and farming endeavors, L.O. was happiest at home with Nancy. They were inseparable - Nancy accompanied him everywhere and (although she will not admit it) provided good advice to him and his bankers by serving on the board of directors of each bank and the holding company. She and L.O. were joined in the banking business by their son, Lurner Oliver Benton IV "Chip", who succeeded L.O. as head of the banking group.

L.O. was not only a family man to Nancy and Chip but was devoted to his extended family, both on the Benton side and the Tate side. He and his sister Margaret worked together in advancing the interests of the family in dealings with the Georgia Marble Company, and when Margaret

unfortunately died, L.O. and his nephew Walter Davis successfully required the successor owners of that corporation to treat the Tate side of his family equitably.

LO. was a loyal friend to untold numbers from all walks of life. He will be missed by a great multitude.

L.O. is survived by his wife of 53 years, Nancy, his son Chip and Chip's family - daughter-in-law Stacy, grandsons Browning and Banks, granddaughter Beth Perry (Taylor) and great-granddaughters Olivia and Hadley Perry. He is also survived by his nieces Lucille Davis Phillips (Mark), Hope Davis Hequembourg (Aaron), nephew Walter Ray Davis III (Kerry) and their families and his cousins Ann Fitzpatrick and Caro Fitzpatrick. He was predeceased by his parents and his two sisters, Margaret Benton Davis and Lucille Tate Benton.

The family is deeply grateful for Willie Moore and Joseph McClendon for their care, service, and devotion. The family will receive friends and family on Wednesday March 6 at L.O. and Nancy 's home from 9:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m. Friends are invited to attend a service of Celebration of Life at the First United Methodist Church 651 College Street, Monticello, Georgia 31064 at 11:00 a.m. on Friday March 8, 2019, with Interment following at Westview Cemetery. Dr. John Brown and Rev. Nathaniel Long will officiate.

Serving as pallbearers will be Mike Nelson, Sr., Mike Cleveland, Willie Moore, Fred "Butch" Durand, Joe McClendon, Howard Glover, Sammy Blackwell, Jerry Gregory, Ernest Turk, Bill Gower, Jerry Harris, Roy Clark, Sid Lane, Roy Embry, Sam Wood, and Joe Hudson. Serving as honorary pallbearers will be Wellborn Price, Billy Connelly, Lint Jordan, and John Mitchell.

In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to Monticello First United Methodist Church, 651 College St., Monticello, Georgia 31064 or Piedmont Academy, 126 Hwy 212 W, Monticello, Georgia 31064.

Jordan Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements.