



## Ben Gause Gautier

October 12, 1916 - September 20, 2015

Ben Gause Gautier of Milledgeville departed this life as he slept on Sunday, Sept. 20, three weeks prior to his 99th birthday. He had lived a full and generous life, sharing himself and his worldly goods as he felt his God intended.

Mr. Gautier was a native of Milledgeville and was predeceased by his parents Walter Bryan Gautier and Mabel Gause Gautier, first wife Nancye Clapp Gautier and daughter Yvonne Louise Gautier. He leaves to celebrate his memory his wife Donna Sanders Gautier, her children Marie Hodgman-Schoeneberg (Jason) of Decatur and Marshall Hodgman (Bridget) of Milledgeville, grandchildren Tucker and Liberty Marie Schoeneberg and Morrison Hodgman, and local cousins including Patricia Bass Riner and Elizabeth Bass Rice. Cousins Patricia Gautier Kitchen of Tallahassee, Priscilla Gautier Bornmann of Alexandria, VA, and Radford Smith of St. Petersburg, FL, as well as their families, survive to carry his memory and the rich Gautier legacy of service to others which was so much a characteristic of his life. A precious young friend Cassidy Clayton likewise cherishes his memory and carries on this legacy as he considered her an “adopted Granddaughter”.

Interment of ashes at Memory Hill on Sat. October 3 will be private. A covered dish luncheon and informal time of sharing memories will be held at First Presbyterian Church at 11:30 and followed by a memorial service at First

Baptist Church at 2:00.

In lieu of flowers the family has request donations to the First Baptist Church Building Fund, 330 S. Liberty St. Milledgeville or to the Café Central Soup Kitchen at 215 Kenan Dr. Milledgeville, GA 31061

And Follows is a biography of Ben's Life

Ben Gautier was born Oct. 12, 1916, in Milledgeville, GA, to Walter Bryan and Mabel Gause Gautier. Walter was originally from west Florida, but was working as a milker at a Milledgeville dairy when he met and stole the heart of Miss Mabel Gause, only child of a prominent local businessman. Abandoning her college education and her parents' plans for her career as a concert pianist, she followed her heart and Walter to California to seek his fortune.

Upon learning he was to become a grandfather, her father Charles Benjamin (Ben) Gause prevailed upon the couple to return to Milledgeville for the birth. Hence, Ben Gause Gautier was born at his grandfather's home on South Jefferson Street and the family remained there until he was five. They attended First Baptist Church, when it was still on Capital Square, and he was enrolled for a term of kindergarten at Peabody, the laboratory school attached to Georgia Normal and Industrial College (now Georgia College).

The family returned to California, making their home at Montebello, but Ben and his mother visited Milledgeville several times during his growing-up years, traveling by train for days. There were many relatives in Milledgeville and in Hancock County to visit, and early childhood friends of Ben's with whom to renew acquaintance.

Ben graduated from Montebello High School, then worked his way through Santa Barbara State College, where he earned a B.A. in Sociology, graduating in 1941. Having been granted all the student deferments he was

allowed, he enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Corps and served for the duration of WWII. He was a medic assigned to the corps flying “the Hump” between India and China and drove ambulances on the Burma Road. Later in life he teased that his rich uncle had offered him a “free tour of the Far East after college that he could not refuse”. Sure; “Uncle Sam” would have drafted him if he had not enlisted in the Air Corps, and he knew he did not want to be a foot soldier.

Many of the locations where he served were supportive rather than combat areas and he was able to be a tourist when on leave. His habit was to go to a nearby city with a YMCA or institution of higher learning, hire a local English speaker to guide him, and learn as much as he could about the place and its people. One of his stops was at the Y in Colombo, Ceylon (Sri Lanka), where he became good friends with the assistant director Howard DeLannerolle and his family. He spent many good times with them and, upon being transferred, told the father something to the effect that he'd like to help the two young sons further their education in the States when the time came. As Ben told it, one might imagine his and Nancye's surprise when, a few years later, the whole family showed up as refugees from an oppressive government which did not appreciate the politically satirical plays Howard wrote. The family lived with them until they could get on their feet, and all remained friends until their respective deaths. The last surviving member of the two families is Dr. Primal DeLannerolle, professor of physiology at Univ. of Illinois, Chicago, who served as Ben's best man when he and Donna married and expects to attend his memorial to add his voice to the chorus of those who loved Ben.

After discharge, Ben rejoined his bride of four years, the former Nancye Elizabeth Clapp of Huntington Beach, CA, whom he had married on a six-hour pass, literally just before shipping out. He later enjoyed telling the story of having showed up for the wedding in full battle dress, pistol and grenades on the belt, etc., and being sent away by the minister to find suitable attire for the

occasion.

Back in civilian life, Ben began work on a master's degree at the University of Southern California and Nancye continued to teach physical education at the junior high level. While he was completing his program and teaching at Huntington Beach High School, their only child Yvonne Louise was born and Nancye became a full-time mother. The family was active at her home church, First Methodist of Huntington Beach, and Ben held several church offices in addition to their volunteering with the youth group.

Leaving the classroom to work for Farmer's Insurance in Los Angeles, Ben managed the company's Safety Foundation, where he was responsible for allocating grant funds for safety education and accident prevention programs in California communities. This was an area in which he had become very interested while teaching driver education. He coordinated a successful campaign to require seatbelts in cars, working closely with the Junior Women's Clubs of the state. He was recognized for his work in delinquency prevention by both the California Youth Authority and the Delinquency Prevention Commission, and for his leadership in the YMCAs of Hollywood and West Hollywood from the late 1950s through mid-sixties.

In 1967, he accepted a position as contract manager with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and moved from Los Angeles to the Atlanta office, settling his family in suburban Lithonia. In 1976, the NHTSA transferred him to its Denver office, from which he retired two years later. In both these locations, he and Nancye were active in Presbyterian congregations, Salem in Georgia and Green Mountain in Colorado, where he served in numerous capacities, including singing in the choir. Ben loved all his church homes and maintained relationships with them long after leaving their respective communities.

Among Ben's many interests was 4-H support. He bred his Arabian-mix mares and provided several youngsters with a young horse to train, forming lasting friendships with some of them and their families. His generous nature has often been teamed with a desire to help recipients develop responsibility, and this is an excellent example.

After Nancye's unexpected death just when he had retired and they were about to move to Sedona, AZ, to join friends for their leisure years, Ben became rather rootless. He had always had a wanderlust and he enjoyed both traveling and horseback riding, combining them when possible. At this point, he criss-crossed the country at least four times with his beloved horse Princess in the trailer behind his trusty blue Chevy pick-up. He would stop to ride, often with equestrian friends of long acquaintance, at locations in Colorado, Arizona, California and Georgia, and places between that seemed appealing. When it was just the two of them, Ben always said that, although he sometimes did not know where they had wandered, Princess always knew the way back to the feed trough at the trailer.

He found his own way back home to Milledgeville in the late 1980s and settled several times in different places. Much of the time, he lived in a motorhome which he could uproot and drive off anytime the notion struck. For awhile, he lived under a big oak tree in a friend's yard, keeping an eye on the house she was renting to a family with five children. Those youngsters liked having a house that came with a built-in Grandpa, and he "adopted" the lot of them as his own, not an uncommon occurrence in his life. He cared deeply for friends and made hundreds over the years, keeping in touch by mail and phone. Until her recent death, he stayed in touch with a third grade classmate, and he continued to talk regularly with the widower of Nancye's matron of honor and with members of the extended Clapp family until just weeks before his death.

One of Ben's interests in recent years was exploring his ancestry, including

seeking out both a Confederate and a Revolutionary War soldier on his mother's side of the family, which gained him membership in the respective heritage organizations. On the Gautier side, he also had a War of 1812 Naval officer whose descendents still carry his name, now in the seventh generation; Thomas Nicholas Gautier can be found in published histories of that conflict and in contemporary telephone directories. Not as much information on his Confederate ancestor Sgt. Edward P. Lane, Company H Georgia Infantry, has been forthcoming. He came out of Hancock County and came back to it; that is about the extent of what Ben learned. Honoring him with service in Old Capitol Camp #688, Sons of Confederate Veterans, one of the great pleasures of his latter years. He has served as both First Lieutenant Commander and Commander of his Camp and continued to attend meetings as long as health and strength permitted - even at 98!

Among his other organizational memberships were Kiwanis Clubs in each area where he lived, recording over 50 years total but only one perfect attendance pin (with which he was most pleased), and "honorary" in Junior Women's Club. Those ladies considered him one of their own as they worked together to further safety education and awareness, so they presented him a membership pin and cufflinks he wore proudly and enjoyed telling the story of being the only man among all the ladies (a position he definitely liked). Another (mostly) female organization he enjoyed was Milledgeville Music Club. He and Fred Heal requested membership at a time few remembered there ever had been a man in the Club, but since both were lovers of music (and their wives were members) they were accepted and remained active until both died this year. He also served on the board of Maranatha Outreach in Milledgeville for fourteen years and in the local chapter of of NAMI, the Oconee Alliance.

In 2007, Ben encouraged the Music Club and GC's young orchestra director

Daniel Kaplunas (who happened to be renting a room in his home) to revive the annual community performance of Handel's Messiah at Christmas. The performance was held, unfortunately, on the same day as that year's Christmas parade, which made getting to the Goldstein Center for pre-performance rehearsal difficult for many, including Ben's resident member of the tenor section. Unable to get closer to the venue than 3 or 4 blocks to park her car, Donna left him in it to move closer and park for the performance after the parade traffic had cleared. That would have worked well if the keys to the car had not gone with her. When she finally returned to the car hours later, after hunting it over several blocks, Ben was furious at having been deserted and forced to miss the program. Fortunately, the conductor provided a DVD of the performance, but it just was not the same. Ben never let Donna forget that. The DVD is scheduled to provide the benediction response "Hallelujah!" at his memorial service.

Soon after settling in Milledgeville, Ben became active, as he had been in other places, in the local chapter of NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness), his interest originally precipitated by his daughter's teenage diagnosis of Schizophrenia which gave him and his wife many challenges. Nancye had more difficulty than Ben did in dealing with the realities of Yvonne's illness and spent untold hours in anguish trying to cope. Her attempts at finding comfort through several pastors' efforts yielded little relief because they felt as unprepared as she to deal with the situation. This concerned Ben so much that he decided, as was his wont, to do something about it.

That "something" was to find a way to establish a program at Columbia Theological Seminary (PCUSA, Decatur) which would prepare ministerial candidates to assist families dealing with mental health issues. Many years before, Ben had joined with friends in California, pouring every dime he could raise into the endeavor, to purchase a piece of beachfront property (at San Simeon – think Hearst publishing empire) upon which they would build a

resort motel. This investment had infuriated Nancye's protective and conservative brothers, who encouraged her to leave him on the spot, but it turned out to be a very profitable enterprise. After Nancye's death, Ben took his share of the stock and donated it to Columbia, which sold it and invested the proceeds in a charitable remainder trust to fund an appropriate program.

The establishment of the program and the Nancye Clapp Gautier Memorial Chair in Pastoral Counseling was to have occurred after those proceeds had been distributed to Ben until his death, then to Yvonne for her lifetime support. Yvonne's untimely death in 2002 and Columbia's good fortune in hiring the exactly suitable person to occupy the Chair shifted that timeframe. Ben was able to attend the ceremony establishing the Ben G. and Nancye Clapp Gautier Chair in Pastoral Theology, Care and Counseling and its program in March of 2010, and it was one of the highlights of his life. The Rev. Dr. Pamela Cooper-White served the Seminary well for 5 years in that capacity and has recently moved to another institution. The Chair will be filled again when another appropriate candidate arises, but the program will continue because there are several capable professors in it.

Donating his personal property for the benefit of others was not without precedent when the motel stock was given to Columbia. Several years earlier he gave his mother's family property east of the Oconee River in Baldwin County to Georgia College in her memory. It is now being used as outdoor classrooms and supports biology and recreation education programs.

Ben learned early in life, when the family had lost nearly all it had in the Depression, to share whatever he had. His mother never knew how many plates to set for dinner, because his father was likely to bring home someone who needed a meal and a place to wash up. His father's trucking business was lost then, but Ben saw him borrow several acres of land a neighbor was not using, turn it into a productive garden, plowing with a mule, and then

market the produce they did not eat from the one truck he had left. This surely formed the attitude in him that setbacks need not be permanent, they can be made into opportunities. Ben lived that and tried to help others benefit from it whenever he could.

Ben Gause Gautier enjoyed good food, good fellowship, good music, good horses, sharing all he had;

Ben loved his fellowman and his Lord. The world is a better place for his having lived in it.

# Previous Events

## Service

OCT 3. 2:00 PM (ET)

First Baptist Church of Milledgeville  
330 S. Liberty St.  
Milledgeville, GA 31061  
<http://www.fbcmilledgeville.com>

# Tribute Wall

JY

“ *Judy And Casey Youngblood lit a candle in memory of Ben Gause Gautier*



**Judy and Casey Youngblood** - September 23, 2015 at 08:05 PM



“ *Betty Irby Evelsizer lit a candle in memory of Ben Gause Gautier*

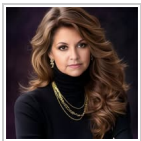


**Betty Irby Evelsizer** - September 21, 2015 at 08:35 AM

KF

“ *May Jehovah God continue to comfort your family during this trying time.*

**knox family** - September 21, 2015 at 05:48 AM



“ *Ms. Donna, where do I begin. My heart has broken into to learn of Mr. Ben's passing. I met this fine gentleman back in 1995 at BellSouth. I really did enjoy him as a customer. He was a great person and he will surely be missed. Please accept our deepest sympathy for your loss and please know that you will be in our thoughts and prayers during this time of grief. May God wrap his loving arms around you and give you the comfort you so much deserve.*

**Judy Jackson Youngblood** - September 20, 2015 at 08:44 PM

WE

“ Donna and family, I am very sure Ben is in resting in the Lord. You have loved him wonderfully and now it is your turn to rest. I remember first meeting him - he was such a gentleman and very welcoming. It meant a lot to me. Be well, keep the precious memories you have gathered over the years, share them when you can. Praying for short grief, long memories and comfort. Hugs and Much love.

*1 Thessalonians 4:13*

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**Wendy** - September 20, 2015 at 01:40 PM