



## Junior Lee Collis

April 17, 1929 - March 27, 2013

Junior Collis of Milledgeville, a mountain farm boy who grew up to be a bass tournament champion and a virtual legend in Georgia bass fishing, died Wednesday at a hospice in Dublin. Funeral Services will be conducted Saturday, March 30, 2013 at 2PM at Williams Funeral Home Chapel of Milledgeville. Interment will follow at Baldwin Memorial Gardens.

The Family will receive friends at Williams Funeral Home on Friday, from 6-8PM.

Collis, 83, underwent throat cancer surgery a few years ago, and his wife, Alta, said that in February he was hospitalized after suffering his ninth case of pneumonia and also a heart attack. He had been on a liquid nourishment diet more than two years.

David Collis of Decatur, Ala., his son from his first marriage, said, "My father loved fishing, but he also loved to teach other people how to catch fish. He enjoyed talking about fishing with people everywhere he went."

The widely known angler, who lived on Lake Sinclair, encouraged people to release bass so that they could be caught again another day.

Collis fished in a number of Ray Scott's Bass Anglers Sportsman Society

national bass tournaments, winning a very challenging one on South Carolina's Lake Keowee in 1973. Contestants hooked few bass, but in three days, Collis caught a total of 23 pounds, 15 ounces, including a 9-pound, 9-ounce bass that struck an 8-inch black grape Jelly Worm that a friend, Eddie Withrow, had predicted would attract a great, great-grandmama bass. His tournament prize of \$3,296 was small by today's standards. A truck driver, Collis didn't have the cash to pay the entry fee to fish on Keowee, so his Atlanta Bass Club friend, Atlanta Falcons defensive end John Zook, paid his \$200 fee. The victory made him the first Georgian ever to qualify for the Bassmasters Classic, which was held in 1973 on Clarks Hill Lake. He didn't win but made new friends and earned the respect of more pro anglers on the cast-for-cash trail.

Junior Lee Collis was born April 17, 1929, on a farm at Gravelly Gap near Blue Ridge in the North Georgia mountains, and he helped the family grow corn, tomatoes, okra, peas and watermelons. Two local men asked the farm boy, then 10, to operate the motor while they trolled on Lake Nottely. They handed him an old reel and a Creek Chub Pike, inviting him to try his luck. The men didn't catch a fish, but he landed his limit of bass. The kid from Gravelly Gap had caught a chronic case of fishing fever that day, and he was happy no doctor found a medicine to cure it.

After serving in the U.S. Army Air Force, he moved to Atlanta, worked a year as a carpenter, then got a job as a driver for Yellow Freight, and he delivered merchandise in the big city more than 30 years.

Wayne Johnson, his uncle who became a Lake Seminole fishing guide, gave him some bass fishing lessons, and he began his lifelong pursuit of Old Nelly, the huge, rod bending largemouth of his dreams. Collis cast a Bagley DB-3, plastic worms, Hot Spots, and Rat-L-Traps to catch many bass weighing from 6 to 10 pounds. He fished in all of the Georgia reservoirs and especially loved

Sinclair, Seminole, West Point, Jackson and Clarks Hill..

He wore several hats---- truck driver, bass club member, bass tournament competitor, speaker at the boat show's bass seminars, fishing teacher, fishing guide, and good will ambassador for the great sport of angling. Once in a Lake Seminole bass tournament, the famed professional angler and TV fishing show host Roland Martin pulled alongside Collis' boat and asked how he was doing. Collis said his hottest lure was a Hellbender cast near stumps and trees. Roland found a Hellbender in his own tacklebox, then proceeded to catch a trophy class largemouth and won the tournament. Roland was ever grateful to Collis and sent him a depth finder in appreciation of the fishing tip. Collis also was a friend of numerous other pro bass anglers, including Bill Dance and Tom Mann, and he helped make famous the fishing lures designed by Jim Bagley and Cotton Cordell.

In the 1970s, fellow Atlanta Bass Club member Doug Bush said Collis was close to nature and had instincts that city fellows lack. "Junior has the uncanny ability to sense movement and activity of fish. He just has the feeling and knows when they're moving and where they'll be," Bush said.

Collis once told a friend, "I've often smelled fish. People have laughed at me, but a fish does put off an odor. Specially a bass will put off a little different odor from a bream or a crappie. Sometimes I can smell a snake lying over on the bank."

He was asked if he had one million dollars, how would he spend it. He smiled and said, "I'd fish every day. I never get tired of fishing. Every day is another excitement and another day to catch fish." One spring day Collis and an Atlanta friend caught almost 50 bass in a central Georgia farm pond. He released a 5-pounder, smiled, and said, "I hope the good Lord lets me fish

until the day that I die.” Collis will lie in eternal rest next to a handsome grave marker that features a color image of him holding a stringer of big bass. A visitor to the Milledgeville cemetery will know that Junior Collis discovered the secret to happiness.

Survivors include his wife- Alta Godfrey Collis of Milledgeville, Children- David(Terry) Collis of Decatur, AL., Annett Martin of Loganville, Tammy (Tim) Swafford of Thorton, CO, and Butch (Darlene) Bunch of Columbia, TN, 10 GC, and a number GGC., Siblings Jack Collis of CA, Jim Collis of CA, Glenn Voyles of GA, and Mary Fox of Atlanta.

In lieu of Flowers the family requests memorial contributions be made to the Junior Collis Memorial Scholarship Fund, C/O Magnolia Bank, 100 East Greene Street, Milledgeville, GA 31061.

# Previous Events

## Visitation

MAR **29**. 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM (ET)

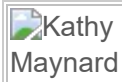
Williams Funeral Home & Crematory - Milledgeville  
1670 N. Jefferson St.  
Milledgeville, GA 31061  
(478) 452-2148  
staff@williamsfuneralhome.net  
<https://www.williamsfuneralhome.net>

## Service

MAR **30**. 2:00 PM (ET)

Williams Funeral Home & Crematory - Milledgeville  
1670 N. Jefferson St.  
Milledgeville, GA 31061  
(478) 452-2148  
staff@williamsfuneralhome.net  
<https://www.williamsfuneralhome.net>

# Tribute Wall



Kathy  
Maynard

“ Junior was a great friend of my mom and dad, David and Mary Sides. He used to stay at Amity Park on West Point Lake when my parents ran the park. My son loved to fish with him and I still have the blue coveralls that have the patches that Junior and other fishermen gave him when he was 4 years old. My son is 37 now, and I still love the Junior Collis fishing stories  
Kathy Maynard

---

**Kathy Maynard** - April 02, 2013 at 07:52 PM



JC

“ Dear Alta,  
Charles Salter called and told me about Junior's passing. I am so sorry to hear this sad news.  
Junior, Charles, and George talked fishing and did some fishing for many years.  
Please accept our deepest sympathy, love, and concern for you and your family at this sad time.  
George has Alzheimer's disease but still has moments of clarity and remembers Junior.  
Sending you our love,  
Jeanne and George Carter

---

**Jeanne Carter** - April 02, 2013 at 05:52 PM

V.

“ To the Collis family. I am deeply concerned about the sorrow and distress that you must be experiencing because of the death of your loved one. From reading the tributes, it seems like Junior Lee was well known and will surely be missed. The Bible gives us comfort and a hopeful future, please read John 5:28 &29 notice what Jesus Christ promised: " Do not marvel at this, because the hour is coming when all those in the memorial tombs will hear him calling and come out." We hurt, because death is an enemy that were not purposed for mankind. 1 Corinthians 15:26.In the future all pain, suffering, and death will be no more...Revelation 21:3&4.

---

**V.G** - April 02, 2013 at 10:50 AM

KW

“ Junior was one of the finest gentleman and sportsman that I ever had the pleasure to know. He was always willing to share his expertise and knowledge of fishing with most anyone who asked. He will definately be missed by all who knew him.  
Blessings to his family.  
Past Atlanta Bass Club member  
Ken Wooldridge

---

**Ken Wooldridge** - March 30, 2013 at 08:54 PM

CF

“ I hate to hear that Junior passed away this week. He was a kind man with a gentle heart and a love for people. He took an interest in me even when I had nothing to give in return. I still remember how patient he was when he was just starting to teach me how to fish. I loved this man.

---

**Chad Fearnow** - March 30, 2013 at 02:45 PM

BH

“ *Alta, Sorry for your loss, I know Junior will be very much missed. Rosie and I will miss him very much. I know we will have the ever lasting memories of fishing with him. Mostly at Mud Bay. Love You and will miss Junior. Bruce & Rosie*

---

**Bruce & Rosie Harvey** - March 29, 2013 at 02:56 PM

KC

*We will remember all the good times, Sorry for your loss. We'll see him again in the big pond one day. Chuck & Kathy Whitehead*

---

**Kathy & Chuck** - March 30, 2013 at 02:21 PM

SB

“ *Dear Alta My sympathy and prayers to you and family for the loss of Jr. I will never forget the soft spoken southern gentleman who had the patience to teach this northern gal how to fish. Love to you and family, Shirley*

---

**shirley baker** - March 29, 2013 at 01:49 PM

JC

“ *So many memories flood our thoughts today.. Good times with a truly gentle spirit.. Junior will always hold a special place in our hearts. Hubert always enjoyed the special way Junior respected the environment while enjoying his love of the sport of fishing. I have heard him say so many times, "If Junior Collis told me to cast my bait into the middle of a cornfield, I would do it. There would surely be fish there." I hope there is a great fishing lake waiting for him in Heaven. He will most certainly be happy with that. A true friend is never replaced - always remembered. Farewell to a beautiful friend.*

---

**Johnnie Coston** - March 29, 2013 at 01:37 PM

NH

“ We wish to extend our deepest sympathy to Alta and David for their loss of Junior, husband and father. We will always remember the good times at Mud Bay, Camp ground in Georgia and of course Florida at Gator RV. We love you Junior and will miss you greatly.

*Love Chuck and Nancy*

---

**Nancy Harvey** - March 29, 2013 at 09:36 AM

AR

“ Speaking of all my friends that knew him,we have lost a true friend and "partna".He was one of a kind! art griffin

---

**art** - March 29, 2013 at 09:06 AM

SB

“ Alta and family, we are so sad to hear about Junior. We hope God gives you and your family comfort at this sad time. He was a wonderful neighbor and friend.



---

**Sonny & Patsy Bass** - March 28, 2013 at 09:50 AM