



Col. (Ret) James E. Anderson

January 25, 1932 - January 26, 2021

Col. James E. Anderson (USAF retired) of Douglas, Georgia passed away Tuesday, January 26, 2021 one day after his 89th birthday due to complications with Covid-19 and his 10-year battle with Parkinson's disease. James Anderson was preceded in death by his only sweetheart and devoted wife of almost 67 years, Geraldine (Gerry) Anderson, by his eldest sister, Grace Anderson Heustis, and parents, Earl and Bessie Anderson. Many will remember Jim for his tireless activism and leadership in countless community organizations, his singular passion to encourage unity and cooperation among all churches regardless of ethnicity or denomination, and his quintessentially southern determination to never meet a stranger.

Few would guess, however, from his successful military and nursing career, the magnitude of early life hardships and challenges he overcame to reach the hard-won rank of Colonel in the USAF reserves. His distinguished 41 year-career ranged from medic to flight registered nurse to certified registered nurse anesthetist (CRNA).

Jim was born in the southernmost town in the United States, Brownsville, Texas in 1932 to missionary parents. However, it was Douglas, Georgia he called home when his father took up a position as pastor of the College Avenue Baptist Church in Douglas in 1944.

At the age of 12 the family's struggles following the Great Depression and during WWII were compounded by his father's untimely death. Hunger and hand-me-down clothes were a familiar reality for him and his widowed mother as it was for many during those years. It became his habit before attending school each morning to walk three miles to a local bakery to grease loaf pans for a few pennies, before hopping a train to buy peanuts which he sold in turn to buy newspapers that he used to help support his mother.

His remarkable ability to often see the good and the humorous even in hard times, however, was evident in his favorite childhood stories. He frequently recalled the joy of eating ice-cold, train-delivered watermelon he and other children ate on hot summer days when damaged fruit were tossed aside near the railroad tracks. Or recounting how he and other children hitched the cheapest ride in town: a local goat that raced its unwanted jockeys to a local church without a porch skirt to knock off his riders when he ran beneath it. The goat got his wish. The children got their ride. It was a win-win.

But Jim credited the commitment he made to Christ as a young man while working his way through military school at Fork Union Military Academy in Virginia as the experience that most shaped everything else that followed. That commitment, to obey God's call to serve Christ and love others in everything he did, became the defining feature of Jim's life.

Jim's early experience during the Korean War as a medic sparked a keen interest in medicine. With the help of his young bride who he credits with getting him through, he graduated in 1958 as one of the nation's first male registered nurses. Nursing students at South Georgia State College will no doubt remember him for times he taught as a substitute teacher, after his retirement, as will the countless patients he cared for throughout his long career as a nurse anesthetist. Many will remember him for taking a moment to pray and to assure them he would be there to wake them when their surgeries

were over.

During his military service Jim attended wounded soldiers in transit throughout the Vietnam War; served as hospital commander at Scott AFB, Illinois during Operation Desert Storm; and was recognized for the role he played as the only anesthetist on the Azore island of Terceira where he attended soldiers and civilians during the worst earthquake in Azore history that killed many, wounded 400 and left 15,000 homeless in 1980. Between his many military deployments he worked as a civilian CRNA in rural Missouri over 20 years. Nearing retirement, he acted as a traveling CRNA for 8 years, filling in for hospitals large and small across the country where he was licensed in 27 states.

But even more than his military and nursing career, it was his role as pastor to which he felt supremely called. From the scores of cadets he and Gerry fed in their home during their years in Richmond and Lexington Missouri (where they owned and operated the Bible Book Nook), to casual conversations standing in the store check out line, to sharing their food with the homeless directed to their door by local churches, or taxiing teenagers to weekend Christian events, and hosting weekly neighborhood Bible studies, he was never without his pastoral hat.

In addition to being an ordained pastor in the Church of God of Anderson Indiana, he volunteered as chaplain for many hospitals, prisons and hospice services; was chaplain for the Georgia Defense Force, American Legion, and the Civil Air Patrol; and participated in the Douglas Ministerial Association, all the while pastoring several churches over the years including Petra Chapel in Douglas and the Kinderloo Church of God in Valdosta for which he never took a salary.

In gestures big and small--putting other people's children through college, or buying 100s of McDonald's Big Macs to share with homesick troops on his flights overseas or donating all proceeds from his and Gerry's business, L'il Stitches, to a crisis pregnancy center--Jim was known for thinking about the needs of others. The ways in which he creatively and stubbornly served his community is literally beyond count.

His family, however, were the most blessed to have lived with him, to have learned from him and to recall stories that still make them laugh. Never a man to pass up an opportunity, he once bought 2 tons of Vidalia onions for a fundraiser, overwhelming their home with the telltale fragrance for weeks afterward. Or the time he bought 40 pounds of overripe bananas on sale, forcing an impromptu marathon of bread baking and a flurry of banana split creations from Gerry's kitchen. Or when he bought hundreds of cans of cat food on sale when they didn't own a cat. The man's thrift was legendary.

Despite constant activity throughout his life, he always made room for fun and a nightly game of dominoes. Just weeks before he passed, he was still able to play. And still winning. There were some things even Parkinson's couldn't change.

In the end, it will be Jim's generosity of heart and comment to love anyone regardless of political, cultural, or denominational differences that speaks loudest about who he was and his ardent love for Christ.

Jim is survived by his four children and their spouses, Randall and Diane Anderson of Houston, Texas; Elizabeth and Richard Jackson of Douglas, Georgia; Douglas and Kelly Anderson of Atlanta, Georgia; and Adrian and Kelli Anderson of Chicago, Illinois; his older sister, Ruth Anderson Hale of Denver, Colorado; 14 grandchildren and 4 great-grandchildren.

Graveside service will be held this Saturday, February 6, 2021 at 2:00 PM. No flowers, please; donations to Gideons International gratefully appreciated. For more information please contact Ricketson Funeral Home, Douglas, GA, (912) 384-1155.

Cemetery Details

Douglas City Cemetery

1622 North Gaskin Avenue
Douglas, GA 31533

Previous Events

Graveside

FEB 6. 2:00 PM (ET)

Douglas City Cemetery
1622 North Gaskin Avenue
Douglas, GA 31533

Tribute Wall



“ *Col. (Ret) James E. Anderson*

November 08, 2022 at 06:41 PM



“ *So sorry to learn of the loss of Jim Anderson. Thoughts and prayers for your family during this time. I appreciate his determination and service to the Lord, his family, community and country. Blessings to you .*

Carol Bratcher - February 11, 2021 at 09:37 AM



“ *Floor Plant for Sympathy was purchased for the family of Col. (Ret) James E. Anderson.*



February 04, 2021 at 09:45 PM

EW

“ We are sorry for the loss you are experiencing right now, but our prayers are with you. Prayers that memories will comfort you and that our hope of eternal life will bring peace to you.
Our lives were dramatically changed because of knowing your father/grandfather. We'll always be grateful to him for introducing us on that first blind date. We celebrated our 37th anniversary just over a month ago. We'll always have wonderful memories of our times with Jim and Gerry. May God's peace be with you all.
We took the photo the last time we visited Jim and Gerry in 2015.

Larry and Ella Wolfe



Ella Wolfe - February 03, 2021 at 12:07 PM

MW

“ Maudine Wright sent a virtual gift in memory of Col. (Ret) James E. Anderson



Maudine Wright - January 27, 2021 at 04:05 PM

KB

“ Many years ago, the Cooperative Extension sponsored a program called "Farmers in Crisis." As the Family and Consumer Sciences Agent for Coffee County, I sent notices out to as many churches as I could to encourage pastors to attend - as the program was in need of local resources. There had been many farmer suicides in Georgia, and we were searching for people who could minister to the needs of farming families during an economic crisis. Reverend Anderson was the ONLY pastor to show up and go with me to the meeting. I won't ever forget the wonderful conversation we had driving to Macon to meet with caring people from all over the state. Reverend Anderson was a very precious man of God!

*Karen Brunegraff
Brunswick, GA*

Karen Brunegraff - January 27, 2021 at 02:35 PM

KB

“ *Beth and Family:*

I am so very sorry to hear of your dad's passing. He had a beautiful spirit! Kindness and gentleness poured out from him, and I am grateful to have known him. I pray for your comfort and healing.

Karen Brunegraff - January 27, 2021 at 02:23 PM