

DeBellis, former insurance commissioner under George Wallace, Fob James, dies

ASSOCIATED PRESS

GREENVILLE — Former Alabama Insurance Commissioner Michael "Mickey" DeBellis died at his Greenville home Tuesday. He was 77.

DeBellis, who served as commissioner under Govs. George C. Wallace and Fob James, was known for his advocacy for the legislation requiring insurance providers to take continuing education courses.

Joining the state's department of insurance in 1973, DeBellis worked in a variety of positions, including investigator, consumer specialist, legislative affairs director, deputy commissioner and assistant commissioner. Gov. Wallace appointed DeBellis as commissioner in 1986, and he served a year until the end of Wallace's administration in 1987. DeBellis stepped down, working elsewhere in the department until appointed again by Gov. James. He served three years.

OBITUARIES

FUNERALS TODAY

Louise Chappell Cooley, 3PM, Pine Hill Memorial Park
Era A. Greene, 7PM, Benefield Funeral Chapel
James R. Humphrey, 3PM, Usrey Funeral Home
Effie Knight, 2PM, Forestlawn Mausoleum
Edna D. Lipham, 2PM, DeArmanville United Methodist
David W. MacConchie, 2PM, First Baptist Church, Jacksonville
James E. Smith, 1PM, Oak Bowery Baptist Church
James L. Swack, 2PM, Cresslawn Cemetery, Cookeville, TN
Florine G. Vincent, 11AM, First United Methodist Church

COOLEY

Talladega — Graveside Rites for Mrs. Louise Chappell Cooley, 87, will be 3:00 p.m. today at Pine Hill Memorial Park in Talladega. Mrs. Cooley died Monday at her residence.

DEARMAN

Anniston — Graveside services for Frank DeArman, 70, of Anniston, AL, will be Thursday, 11:00 a.m. at Forest Lawn Gardens in Anniston, AL with Rev. Timothy Pope officiating. Anniston Funeral Services is in charge of arrangements.

Mr. DeArman died Wednesday, November 9, 2005 at Stringfellow Hospital. Survivors include his wife, Maudine DeArman, of Cleveland, OH; two sons, Frank DeArman and Anthony DeArman; two daughters, Wanda DeArman and Cassandra DeArman, all of Cleveland, OH; two sisters, Lillie Mae Walker, of Cleveland, OH and Nell Evans, of Anniston, AL; eight grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

Mr. DeArman was a life long resident and was preceded in death by his sister, Ayleca Skelton and his mother, Gladys DeArman.



GREENE

Anniston — Funeral services for Mrs. Era Ayers Lee Greene, 90, formerly of Randolph County, will be 7:00 p.m. tonight from Benefield Funeral Chapel. Visitation, this evening from 6-7 p.m. at the funeral home.

HARVELL

Attalla — Graveside services for Hershel Harvell, 74, will be 2:00 p.m. Thursday at Tillison Cemetery. Glencoe-Hokes Bluff Chapel is in charge of arrangements.

HILL

Eastaboga — Funeral services for John R. Elston, 55, of Eastaboga, AL, will be 12:00 noon Thursday at Salem Baptist Church in Eastaboga, AL with Rev. Rogers Montgomery officiating. Burial will be in Forest Lawn Gardens in Anniston with Anniston Funeral Services in charge. The family will receive friends this evening from 6-8 p.m. at the funeral home. Mr. Elston will lie in state at the church for one hour prior to the service.

Mr. Elston died Saturday, November 12, 2005 at his residence.

He leaves to cherish his memories, his sons, John R. Elston, Jr. (Sheila), of Eastaboga, and Joel G. Elston (Carmen), of Ft. Sill, OK; one daughter, Lucinda Embry (Mark E.), of Lincoln; sister, Mary Ellen Parker (Willie C.), of Eastaboga; three grandchildren; one uncle, Calvin Cunningham; a very special

loved one, Evie Lauderdale of Sylacauga, AL; best friend, Wendell Westbrook (Elaine), of Atlanta, GA. A host of nieces, nephews, cousins and other beloved friends also survive him.

Pallbearers will be Talladega Sheriff Department.

Mr. John R. Elston was born January 18, 1950 to Mary Louise Elston and John Henry Elston of Eastaboga, AL. At an early age he confessed Jesus Christ and united with Salem Baptist Church in Eastaboga, AL. He was a graduate of Ophelia S. Hill High School in Mumford, AL. He entered the United States Army on July 25, 1968. He was honorably discharged on October 31, 1969. While in the Army he received the Vietnam Service Award with 3 bronze stars, National Defense Service Medal, Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal, Combat Infantry Badge, and the Bronze Star Medal. He worked for the Talladega County Sheriff's Department for 30 years. He served as a Sergeant, Lieutenant, Investigator, Head of the drug task force and helicopter pilot. He was also employed by the Talladega County Board of Education for 27 years. He served as a bus driver.

and Michael McDonald.

Mrs. Hill was a native of Hazletton, PA. She was preceded in death by her husband, William M. Hill, and son William M. Hill, Jr.

MILLER

Centre — Memorial service for Thomas G. Miller, 69, of Centre, AL will be 1:00 p.m. Thursday at Jordan Funeral Home Chapel. Mr. Miller died Tuesday, November 15, 2005 at his residence.

MYERS

Heflin — Funeral services for Ruben Alta Myers, 75, will be 2:00 p.m. Thursday at Dryden Funeral Home Chapel. Visitation from 5-7 p.m. this evening at the funeral home.

SWACK

Anniston — Graveside services for James L. Swack, 92 will be 2:00 p.m. today at Cresslawn Cemetery, Cookeville, TN.

W.T. Wilson Funeral Chapel is in charge.

Anniston Star Obituary Policy

It is the policy of The Anniston Star to publish obituaries of local residents and former local residents. Obituaries must be submitted by funeral homes. Obituaries are not accepted from family members or friends of the deceased.

Death notices up to eight lines of type are published at no charge. Death notices can include the deceased person's name, age, address, date of death, time and place of services, and the funeral home in charge of arrangements. This information must be submitted to The Star by a funeral home.

The Star now charges funeral homes to publish complete obituaries. The amount varies according to the number of lines published. Obituaries published in The Anniston Star are also published on The Anniston Star Online at no additional charge. Photographs are accepted for publication. Fees for obituaries in The Star are billed directly to the funeral homes. Payment is not accepted from family members or friends of the deceased.

The Star reserves the right to edit obituaries. In most instances the family's content and style will be published in the form submitted to us. There are no limits on numbers of survivors, pallbearers, honorary pallbearers, or any other information the family wants included, so long as good taste and judgment prevail.

Pallbearers will be Joseph Hill, Jeremy Hill, Jamie Hill, John Morrison, Jeff Abbott,

Conservative leader of Southern Baptists dies after cancer bout

Local clergy recall Rogers' impact on Northeast Alabama

FROM STAFF, WIRE REPORTS

Calhoun County pastors on Tuesday remembered the Rev. Adrian Rogers as a mentor for young preachers.

Rogers, 74, whose legacy runs through Northeast Alabama, died Tuesday morning of cancer complications as the Alabama Baptist State Convention was getting under way in Huntsville.

Rogers was a three-time former president of the Southern Baptist Convention. The longtime pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in suburban Memphis, Tenn., led the movement to bring the 16 million-member denomination under the control of religious conservatives. He retired earlier this year.

The Rev. Wayne Woods, pastor of Grace Baptist Church in Oxford, remembers Rogers as a "man of grace."

"He was a tremendous Bible teacher. He had a heart to pass on the lessons he learned, particularly to young pastors," Woods said. "Following his retirement, he met with a group of 50 young pastors and their wives to share these lessons. My wife and I were a part of that."

Sid Nichols, director of missions for the Calhoun Baptist Association, had the opportunity to meet Rogers many times.

"We've had prayer for the Rogers family during several of the convention sessions," Nichols said. "We know that he is rejoicing with his Lord and enjoying the things he has preached about."

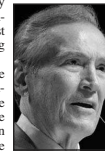
Rogers was hospitalized earlier this month after developing pneumonia during cancer treatment, according to announcement of his death on his ministry's Web site.

He first was elected president of the SBC in 1979, at the beginning of a long and sometimes bitter power struggle between religiously conservative pastors and their more moderate counterparts.



THE LINKS

Love Worth Finding: <http://www.lwf.org>
Southern Baptist Convention: <http://www.sbc.net>



ROGERS

"A mighty oak has fallen in God's forest," fellow Baptist leader Jerry Falwell said from Lynchburg, Va., where he directs Jerry Falwell Ministries. "He began the theological and spiritual renaissance that brought the largest Protestant denomination back to its original roots and commitment to the Bible."

Rogers was part of an "inerrancy movement," which championed the belief that the Bible is free from error and literally accurate in all ways.

The conservative movement Rogers helped lead also pushed the denomination to stronger political opposition to abortion, homosexuality and the ordination of female pastors, said Bob Allen, a writer and commentator for the Baptist Center for Ethics, an independent Baptist organization headquartered in Nashville.

"The Southern Baptist Convention today would be part of the religious right, and 20 years ago it would have been more mainstream," Allen said. "I think it would also be fair to say the conservatives have developed pretty strong ties to the Republican Party."

While Rogers may have been less well known outside the SBC than some other Baptist leaders, "no one has been more influential inside the Southern Baptist Convention," Allen said.

He was pastor of Memphis' Bellevue Baptist Church for 32 years, and under his direction, the church's membership grew from 9,000 to more than 28,000.

Rogers stepped down as Bellevue's pastor in March. He is survived by his wife, Joyce, four children and one grandchild.

Star Staff Writer Jenny P. Taylor contributed to this Associated Press report.

Men in Mobile are taking ho-ho-hoing to new level

'Santa School' teaches finer points of being jolly

BY ROY HOFFMAN

Associated Press

MOBILE — Seven weeks before Christmas, in a workroom at Colonial Mall Bel Air, a half-dozen men in long white beards, with round bellies and crinkly eyes, sat at a table preparing themselves for the holiday season.

These men — call them Santa's helpers — were learning to dress, nod and laugh like St. Nick.

They were in Santa School. "Let's hear your 'Ho, ho, ho,'" said Mark Allen, the president of Instant Photo Corporation of America, which had gathered these jolly guys together in anticipation of a busy holiday season.

Allen knows scores of boys and girls want to sit on Santa's lap, grin, wave and have their pictures taken. At \$12.99 for a 5 by 7 or two 3 by 5 or five wallet-size photos, Allen wanted to make sure all would go smoothly in the 60 seconds per child that Santa usually can afford.

Allen, with his Mobile-based company, runs Santa schools at 10 shopping malls throughout the South.

"Santa never promises a child anything," Allen told his pupils. "Otherwise, parents might get mad at Santa. Santa only says, 'I'll see what I can do.'"

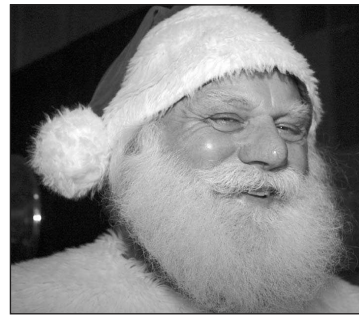
The bearded men nodded. "Santa is jolly," he reminded them.

Their big, long beards waggled back and forth. "Santa," he continued, "is nice."

Santa even will, Allen said, play "peekaboo" for a photograph with a child who is too scared to sit in his lap. In those cases, the child is seated in Santa's chair, then Santa peers out from behind the chair just in time for the camera snap.

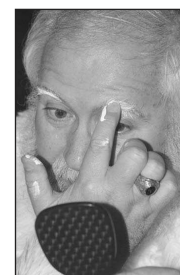
For those who might have peeked in from the hallways and worried that these were Santa lookalikes with big, fake beards, a closer look proved otherwise.

These Santas, except for one, had full, natural white beards, although a few of the men said that their whiskers sometimes get a little brown in the winter. But Christmastime — with tint as



Henry Williford, above, practices his smile last week in 'Santa School' at Colonial Mall Bel Air in Mobile, while Milton Larche, right, practices applying Santa makeup. Seven weeks before Christmas, in a work room at the Mobile mall, a half-dozen men with white beards are preparing themselves for the holiday season by learning to dress, nod and laugh like St. Nicholas.

Photos by Victor Calhoun/Associated Press



bright as snowflakes — gets them looking wintry again.

Some were new to working Santa's route, but others had been in the business already.

Mike Cox, for example, disguises himself as a city garbage truck driver the rest of the year, but even so, the children run out for lollipops and to give him lists of presents they want.

Dempsey Cawley, who works at Home Depot, got the Santa spirit when one of his managers asked him to sit in for the merry fellow.

Henry Williford, who says children approach him all the time to thank him for presents, used to work for the Mobile County Health Department.

"What's fun is the expression in the eyes of the children," said Carl Ehtredge, who used to work in a paper mill. "Santa gets to see an expression that Mommy and Daddy can't see."

Ehtredge said he once had a child on his lap start to fall off and

clutch onto his beard. Yes, the children ask for toys, he said, but some ask for other gifts.

He once had a boy ask for "help with math."

"Fox said a boy asked him to 'fix Daddy's truck.'"

One boy told Cox that he wanted to "talk to Daddy."

"Where's he?" Cox asked the child.

"He's in Heaven."

All of Santa's helpers, big red hats tilting back and forth, nodded and got teary-eyed as the stories rolled out.

Mark Allen said he scouts for Santas all around town, spies the beard and talks to the men to see if they have the Yuletide spirit.

Allen confessed that, as a boy, his parents never took him to see Santa. Now, he works with Santas every Christmas.