



Dr. John Cunningham Taylor

John Taylor Obituary

Obituary published on Legacy.com by Fischer Funeral Care & Cremation Services on Apr. 26, 2024.

Dr. John C. Taylor passed away in [Atlanta, Georgia](#) on Sunday April 21, 2024, just two-and-a-half weeks before his 103rd birthday. He died in the home that he and his wife Nancy Womack Taylor built in Brookhaven in 1993, and where he always said he wanted to spend his last days, joking that he was "Brookhaven before Brookhaven was cool. " John was driven by many interests and causes in his life. Whether in his role as a student, pastor, husband, father, grandfather, educator, journalist or athlete, he was passionate in his work and devoted to those he loved and served.

His early years were influenced by his father's work in churches around the country. He was born in [Manton, California](#) on May 9, 1921 and was raised in the orange groves of Florida, before going to high school in [Deep Creek, Virginia](#), where his father was a pastor, teacher, band leader and coach. After graduating from Carson Newman College in Tennessee, he went to Southwestern Theological Seminary in Ft. Worth, Texas and followed his father into the ministry at a small church in Littlefield. It was during his time as a "Texan" that his three sons were born. In 1954 he moved his family east to pastor Southside Baptist Church in [Tuscaloosa, Alabama](#). While there, he earned his master's degree in journalism at the University of Alabama, and became a lifelong Crimson Tide football fan. His devotion to the "Bear" and "Crimson Tide" was so devout that he often wore a hounds-tooth hat and had a cuckoo clock that played the Alabama fight song

every hour.

In 1960, the Taylor family moved north to [Carbondale, Illinois](#) where John took a job with the Illinois Baptist newspaper. He worked as a reporter/columnist during the week and would pastor small churches in rural areas of Southern Illinois. On early Sunday mornings he would "pack up the babies and grab the old ladies" and take his traveling salvation show to towns like Prarie du Rocher and Vienna, staying all day for the evening service and returning home to Carbondale late that night.

This demanding schedule continued with a reporting job at the Southern Illinoisian newspaper in the mid 60's and 70's, while he simultaneously worked on his doctorate. Even though his plate was full, he always found time to seek out a basketball court, baseball field or golf course for his sons and their friends. After reporting the latest happenings in So Ill for almost a decade, he was hired for a teaching/public relations position at Shawnee College in [Ullin, Illinois](#) and subsequently worked at Southern Illinois University teaching and managing the operations and at the Daily Egyptian student newspaper.

Upon retirement, he gave life to a long kindling interest in nutrition and exercise by returning to SIU to get his doctorate in health and wellness. Around this time, he started racing in triathlons, swimming and biking events in Senior Olympics, and barely a week would go by without him competing at some kind regional or national race. All this culminated with him being the world's first 90 year-old to complete a USATA sanctioned triathlon and earning the gold medal in the Triathlon at the Senior Olympic Games in Houston in 2011.

After his wife Nancy passed away in 1998, he met Sally Jo Johnson, who spent the next 25 years as his loving partner. He will be greatly missed by his three sons, John W., Charles L. and Paul Randall, along with daughters-in-law Donna, Helen and Lisa, grandchildren Brent, Noah and Brooke and great-grandchildren Gideon and Vera. He also will be missed by hundreds of students and parishioners whose lives he touch in so many ways through the years.

A traditional funeral service will be held on Saturday May 4 at 11 am, at Covenant Presbyterian Church, 2461 Peachtree Road, [Atlanta, GA](#) 30305. A reception with light food and refreshments will follow. Flowers may be sent to Covenant on Friday May 3 by noon or Saturday May 4 by 10 am.