



William H. (Bill) Cotton

March 12, 1949 - September 27, 2024

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Bill Cotton, age 75, of Lakeland, FL, passed away peacefully on September 27, 2024, at The Manor at Carpenter's Estates. His Celebration of Life will be on Sunday, October 20, 2024, with visitation at 2 PM, and a service following at 3 PM, in the Light of Lights Chapel, at Victory Church. Dr. M. Wayne Blackburn will officiate.

Bill was born on March 12, 1949, in Panama City, FL, to the late Howard and Sadie Cotton. He graduated from Oxford High School, in Oxford, AL, and received his bachelor's degree from Southeastern University, in Lakeland, FL. It was at SEU that Bill was called into ministry, and that he met his wife, Reneé Ray Cotton. They were married on August 14, 1971, in Madison, TN, before returning to Lakeland to begin their lives together.

From his early years, Bill was an outstanding athlete who excelled in baseball, basketball, and football. He taught and coached at Bethune Middle School, Lake Wales High School, Kathleen High School, and Crystal Lake Middle School. He played on semi-pro softball teams in his twenties, as well as organized and played in softball tournaments in various locations throughout Georgia and Alabama for the Assemblies of God. His devotion to the sport

was evident as he played once with a broken arm, and once during a hurricane.

Bill and Reneé were blessed with a daughter, Mandy, a few years after marriage, and then moved to Columbus, MS, where Bill became a youth pastor. A son, Brady, joined their family three years later as they continued in youth ministry throughout Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and Tennessee. They returned to Lakeland, in 1989, where Bill taught school and coached before taking a position with the Department of Juvenile Justice. He continued to pour life into young people, going above and beyond to reach youth in need.

In addition to his athletic abilities, and spending time on a ball field, Bill loved to hunt and fish, and all things Alabama football. He loved to laugh, and to make others laugh. But nothing was as important to him as spending time with his family whom he loved dearly. He spent his days finding ways to show them how much he loved them. He could be seen playing with Barbies and dolls or joining in on tea parties with his “Prissy Britches,” or playing and coaching baseball and basketball with his son, Brady.

He loved his wife, Babe, and would do anything for her, even driving across town to put gas in her vehicle so that she didn’t have to do it. He loved to do special things for her, and with her, and she admits that he did spoil her.

Bill loved every minute he was able to spend with his grandchildren. They brought him immense joy even in his final days.

Survivors include his wife of 52 years, Reneé Cotton, of Lakeland; daughter, Mandy Cotton Brandt, and her husband, Kevin, of Lakeland; son, Brady Cotton, and his wife, Amy, of North Carolina; brother, Doug Cotton, and his wife, Glenda, of Charleston, SC; grandchildren Olivia and Asher Brandt, and

Camryn and Aubrey Cotton; along with many cousins, nieces, and nephews.

Memorials may be made to PAL – Police Athletic League, by clicking here to donate:

<https://square.link/u/vUjaMAzI>

Previous Events

Visitation

OCT **20**. 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM (ET)

Victory Church (Light of Lights Chapel)
1401 Griffin Road
Lakeland, FL 33810

Celebration of Life Service

OCT **20**. 3:00 PM (ET)

Victory Church (Light of Lights Chapel)
1401 Griffin Road
Lakeland, FL 33810

Tribute Wall



“ *Gentry-Morrison Funeral Homes created a Tribute Video in memory of William H. (Bill) Cotton*



Gentry-Morrison Funeral Homes - October 15, 2024 at 08:49 AM

MP

Beautiful video. You can see the love for his family. Love his grandchildren. You are very blessed to have such sweet and wonderful memories of this special dad. I haven't seen Brady in a long time but seeing Bills younger photos I can see the similarities. Praying for peace as you go through this difficult time.

Marcia Warnock Peacock - October 16, 2024 at 02:34 PM

KH

I knew Bill while attending First Assembly in Albany, Ga. What a great guy. So sorry to hear of his passing.

Kim Hatton - October 19, 2024 at 11:45 PM

SS

“ *Dear Renee and family,
Our family is so saddened to hear of Bill's passing. We were just made aware of it yesterday. He was always a precious, kind, Christian man. Please know that you are all in our prayers.
(Bill's cousins)
Sheila Steeley Stinson
Carla Steeley*

Sheila Steeley Stinson - November 03, 2024 at 08:00 PM

CP

“ I am so sorry to hear of Bills passing. It has been over 50 years since I have seen or heard anything of Bill. It was in 1970 before I left Southeastern. I had met him & Doug at Youth Camp in Kings Mountain. They were both so kind and funny. I think of them both because they are good memories. Sad to say I don't recognize him or Doug in any of the pictures but I so enjoyed seeing them & your beautiful family. I know from seeing the pictures he will be missed by so many and especially you. You can see in both your eyes that you loved each other dearly. I pray for God's peace and comfort for you in the coming days.

Carolyn Coker Patterson

Carolyn Coker Patterson - October 22, 2024 at 09:15 PM

LS

“ I've known Bill since he started with DJJ. He was one the kindest person I've ever known. He always had a smile on his face and would crack jokes. I don't know of anyone who ever had an unkind word about him. He would help anyone at anytime even when he was overwhelmed with work... but he would never tell you, he would smile and help anyway. God finally took one of his best angels home. My prayers to Renee and Mandy and the rest of the family. God bless you all.

Lori StevensSmith - October 19, 2024 at 05:49 PM

MG

“ Bill was a wonderful, kind hearted man. I know he is with God.

He will be greatly missed.

JPO Marie Giglio.

Marie Giglio - October 04, 2024 at 02:59 PM