

OBITUARY

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Dateline: Greenville

Mr. Leslie Holland Garner, 89, of Greenville, died Monday, February 23, 2009, from injuries sustained in a fall. He was born April 26, 1919, in Newport, North Carolina, the son of Lila and Howard Claus Garner.

The funeral service will be conducted Friday at 11am in the Christian Life Ministry Center at St. James United Methodist Church. Burial will follow in Pinewood Memorial Park with Masonic Rites.

Les dearly loved his family and was extremely proud of his children and grandchildren. He reserved a place in his heart for children with special needs. He had a wide circle of friends in Greenville, Pitt County and across the state and nation, who he loved as an extended family. Throughout his long life, he freely and generously gave of himself as he worked to make this a better world for everyone.

Les Garner served his country in World War II and received the Distinguished Flying Cross for his 51 missions in the Army Air Corps. He was a successful businessman, a founding partner of Garner Wynne Manning, Inc., President of Garner Wholesale Merchandisers, president of the North Carolina Wholesalers Association and board chairman of the national Toiletries Merchandising Association.

He was a Charter Member of St. James United Methodist Church. An active member of the United Methodist Men and the Men's Sunday School Class, he chaired the church's Advisory Board and Finance Committee. In the Greenville community he was an active supporter of the Salvation Army, a life member and past chair of its Advisory Board. He enthusiastically led the Salvation Army's Christmas Fund Drive for more than 40 years.

He was a member of The Masonic Order since 1946. He was elected Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of North Carolina in 1976 and achieved the 33rd Honorary Degree, the highest degree in masonry. He was a member of Crown Point Lodge #708 and a Shriner of the Sudan Temple. He was a board member of Oxford Orphanage for 9 years, serving as Chairman and President.

Les Garner was an active member of Kiwanis for more than 40 years. He was Kiwanian of the Year of the Greenville Club in 1971 and Kiwanian of the Year of the University City Club in 1990. He was both Lieutenant Governor and Governor of the Carolinas District. During his leadership of Kiwanis, he helped organize more than 50 clubs, including the first Golden K Club and the first all-female club in Kiwanis International. He was instrumental in the success of the University City Kiwanis Peanut Project, which now annually raises more than \$50,000 for the benefit of local charities.

Les Garner was the second President of the East Carolina University Pirate Club and an active supporter and fan of ECU athletics. In recent years, one of his greatest joys was leading the singing of "Take Me Out to the Ballgame" during the seventh inning stretch at all home Pirate baseball games.

In 1975, he was named the Citizen of the Year by the Greenville Area Chamber of Commerce. He served as Mayor of Greenville from 1986-1987. He received the Boy Scouts of America Distinguished Service Award in 1995. He played an instrumental role in the Scales-Aldridge Golf Tournament for the benefit of J. H. Rose High School which last year was renamed the Scales-Aldridge-Garner Golf Tournament in his honor. Just last month he was honored by the Greenville-Pitt County Chamber of Commerce as the second recipient of the Legends Award for his decades of community service. The Legends Award recognized Leslie Garner's "outstanding character and his commitment to his community and to all of the people in it."

Les had a zest for life that was evident to all who knew him. He remained active and involved until his last days. This past Saturday before the fall that injured both Les and his friend Gladys Chianello, he led the singing of "Take Me Out to the Ballgame" at an ECU baseball game, and that evening escorted Gladys to a formal charity event.

He was predeceased by his parents, his wife of 47 years Evelyn Griffin Garner, his brothers, Walter Glenn, Leroy, Leland, and Arnold, and his sister Madeline Rivers.

He is survived by his son Leslie H. Garner Jr. and wife Katrina Jolly Garner of Mt. Vernon, Iowa; daughter Elaine Garner Denton and husband Wayland Denton of Greenville; son William Griffin (Griff) Garner and wife Christie Priestley Garner of Greenville; his foster daughter Gail Lynch Manning and husband Mac Manning of Greenville; and his foster son Barry Lynch of King, NC.

He is also survived by grandchildren who adored him; Brantley and William Garner of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Derek Denton of Greenville, Scott Denton of Albemarle, Brad Garner and wife Emily of Greenville, Amie Garner Miles and husband Jeremy of Leon, Nicaragua, Ashley Garner of Chapel Hill, Gray Garner of Greenville; and a step-granddaughter, Frances Manning of Greenville. He is also survived by his sisters-in-law Anna Garner, Louise Griffin Hill and husband Frank, and Peggy Griffin; brother-in-law, Billy Green; and by his many loving nephews and nieces.

The family will receive friends at Wilkerson Funeral Home Thursday from 4 to 7 pm and other times at the home of Griff and Christie Garner, 4104 Hardwick Court.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Les and Evelyn Garner Scholarship Fund, c/o St. James United Methodist Church, 2000 E. 6th St., Greenville, NC 27858, the University City Kiwanis Endowment Fund, c/o Todd Brown, 600 Lynndale Court, Suite D, Greenville, NC 27858, or the Salvation Army, P. O. Box 113, Greenville, NC 27835.

On-line condolences at www.wilkersonfuneralhome.com.