



Helen Lanier Strickland

September 7, 1936 - December 19, 2019

Longtime Lakeland resident and retired ABAC professor and community leader Helen Lanier Strickland, 83, passed away peacefully Thursday, December 19, 2019, at Langdale Hospice House following a lengthy illness.

She was born September 7, 1936, the daughter of the late Weylud Hudson and Bernice (Bird) Lanier of Metter. In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by her husband of almost two decades, John W. Strickland. At the time of his death in 1980, he was the much beloved Lanier County agricultural extension agent in Lakeland.

Following her 1954 graduation from Metter High School, she attended the University of Georgia, graduating from the Henry Grady School in 1958 with a BA in journalism and in 1960 with a master's degree. While at UGA, she foreshadowed her future career as a writer serving as associate editor of *The Red & Black*, the campus newspaper, and as associate editor of the college yearbook, *The Pandora*. She also won a national contest designing the first women's collegiate class ring for Josten.

After college, she served three years as public relations director for the Savannah newspapers and then taught high school English in Tift and Worth counties before settling in Lakeland where her husband could live amongst the farmers with whom he worked. She began her career, and commute, to Tifton as an Associate Professor and Director of Student Publications for Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College in 1968. She remained there until her retirement in 1999 and, during this period, completed doctoral courses at Georgia State and Valdosta State University.

She served as adviser to the campus newspaper, *The Stallion*; the yearbook, *TABAC*; literary magazine, *Pegasus*; and an agricultural magazine, *The Agriculturalist*. All of the publications she advised received numerous state and national honors. Most notably, for 26 of the 27 years she advised the newspaper, it was named the best junior college newspaper in the state by the Georgia Press Association. This was an unprecedented string of accolades not matched before or since.

What can't be demonstrated in a mere list of accomplishments for an educator is the measure of lives changed and students inspired. Helen Strickland's inspiration traveled far beyond her classroom walls and is demonstrated in the accomplishments of her many students across the southeast and beyond.

Mrs. Strickland's students learned from her example a commitment to excellence in all they undertake, a strong sense of personal responsibility, a societal obligation for community service and amplification of important life lessons about how to treat others with dignity and respect. She inspired her students to have confidence in their abilities and, under her tutelage, students often discovered talents they did not yet know they possessed. She kept in touch with countless former students, attending ceremonies when they were honored, dancing at weddings and, in some cases, slipping into the back of a church to provide comfort at the funerals of their parents.

"Helen Strickland was larger than life. She was a professor, advisor, designer, publicist, friend and all-knowing mom-figure to hundreds, if not thousands, of ABAC students," said Cathy Cox, dean of the Mercer University School of Law and former Georgia Secretary of State and former president of Young Harris College. "She took me in as one of her student writers and editors for the ABAC yearbook, and my life was forever changed."

"I became part of her brood – for life. She guided my growth as a student at ABAC and beyond; she counseled many of my life choices and decisions at ABAC and for decades afterwards. She awed me over and over with her brilliance, her creativity, her astute judgment and intuition, her unparalleled "people skills" and her spot-on sense of humor," Dean Cox said. "I know virtually every student who had the good fortune to work closely with Mrs. Strickland on a student publication over her 30-plus years at ABAC felt just the same way about her. I loved her dearly!"

As UGA's Grady College celebrated its Centennial in 2015, Mrs. Strickland received a unique honor as the "Distinguished Alumni Educator" during a program which attracted more than 400 guests and featured remarks by then-Governor Nathan Deal.

Mrs. Strickland's very active life extended far beyond the classroom. As a long-time advocate of the arts and rural development, she served two terms on the Georgia Council for the Arts and Humanities and one term on the Georgia National Fair Board. She was elected to serve on the Lanier County Board of Education from 1991 to 1999 and as chair of the board from 2001 to 2005. She wrote a column for the Lanier County News called "Strictly Speaking" for more than 15 years.

She and her late husband, John, joined two other couples to found the Flatlanders Fall Frolic in 1974. The fun-filled weekend of Labor Day activities included a juried arts and craft show, which brought thousands of visitors to Lakeland for more than four decades. Management of the Frolic more recently shifted to the local Chamber of Commerce.

Evidence of Mrs. Strickland's creative side, organizational skills and culinary talents is found on the shelves of many South Georgia kitchens where cooks place their well-used copies of The Flatlanders Cookbook, a collection of Lanier County recipes. The first of three editions with a distinctive red and yellow cover was published in 1976, and a second collection of recipes, Flatlanders Too, was published in 1995.

For more than 40 years, Mrs. Strickland taught a men and women's Sunday School Class called "The Active Bunch," which one member readily admits was far more active in its earliest years. She was a member of the Lions Club and was named its Citizen of the Year the first year the award was presented.

For most of the past three years, even as her health continued to decline, she kept a busy schedule of activities in the Lakeland community, often accompanied by one member of a team of caregivers local citizens nicknamed "Helen's Heavenly Angels."

In addition to her parents and husband, she was preceded in death by brothers, Dan Lanier and Albert Lanier; sisters, Laurie Lanier Pearson and Jewel Bird Lanier McMinn; as well as a brother-in-law, Joe Strickland.

Her survivors include a daughter, Julie B., and her husband Jake Owens of Appling, and a son, John W. "Jay Jay", and his wife Lisa Strickland of Lakeland. Her grandchildren include Jacey Owens of Augusta; John Hudson Owens, an ABAC student; and Jacob and Julianna Owens, both of Appling. The remaining grandchildren, Marihelen Strickland, Trey Strickland and Taft Strickland, all reside in Lakeland. Other survivors include a number of nieces, nephews and extended family members in Georgia and California as well as sister-in-law Sharon Strickland of Uvalda.

The family will receive friends on Sunday, December 22, 2019, from 4 to 7 pm at the Lakeland United Methodist Church in Lakeland. A celebration of life is scheduled at 11 am on Monday, December 23, 2019, at Southside Baptist Church in Lakeland. The graveside burial service is scheduled at 4 pm on Monday, December 23, 2019, at Moseley Cemetery in Uvalda.

Memorial gift in lieu of flowers may be made to the scholarship fund for journalism students at ABAC earlier established in her honor: The ABAC Foundation – ABAC 13, 2802 Moore Highway, Tifton, Georgia 31793.

Messages of sympathy may be expressed online at www.musicfuneralservices.com. The compassionate and caring staff of Music Funeral Services of Lakeland is caring for Mrs. Strickland's family.

Cemetery

Moseley Cemetery

S. Old River Road
Uvalda, GA,

Events

DEC 22 **Visitation** 04:00PM - 07:00PM
Lakeland First United Methodist Church
80 W. Main St., Lakeland, GA, US, 31635

DEC 23 **Service** 11:00AM
Southside Baptist Church
326 US-221, Lakeland, GA, US, 31635

DEC 23 **Graveside Service** 04:00PM
Moseley Cemetery
S. Old River Road, Uvalda, GA, US

Comments



“ An external video has been added.



Music Funeral Service - December 27, 2019 at 05:32 PM



“ I send my heartfelt condolences to the Strickland family. I remember our long talks with great fondness. She was devoted to her community and family. She was strong, bright, had a wicked sense of humor, and one of the most talented people I ever met. I have missed her, and know that she will be missed by many.

Ruth May

Ruth May - December 23, 2019 at 07:12 AM



“ I Always knew Ms. Helen as JJ's and Julie's mom till I actually met her when I worked at Dr. B's office. What a story teller and the jokes she would just drop by to tell. She made many long days so much better! What a pleasure it was when I could say, I knew Ms. Helen as Ms.Helen! She will be missed!

Kim Heard - December 22, 2019 at 08:12 PM



“ I will never forget the one and only day I had with Helen Strickland. As I was picking up my medicine at the Lakeland Pharmacy, I met “Miss Helen” when I was not feeling my best. She looked at me and said, “Now, who are you?” I told her my name and told her I was not from here. She said, “I know your not from here because I would have remembered you and those eyes.” I was sick with the flu, and I know I looked horrible, but she found a way to make me feel special. You see “Miss Helen” had a way of making you feel like you belonged even in an unfamiliar place. She had a gift of making an impression on your heart. I instantly loved her.... and I felt she loved me too. I won't ever forget that day or the blessing of meeting such a special lady. I am so sorry for the loss of such a treasure of a lady as Helen Strickland. I will continue to pray for this family and hope God's love will wrap around them like a warm cozy blanket.

Much Love,
Nan Fletcher



“ Sending prayers and our sympathy. Cherish the memories. May GOD give you all peace and comfort during this time.

Eva Nell & Sherwood King - December 22, 2019 at 08:13 AM



“ My condolences to the Strickland clan. I'm sure you know Helen's impact was felt far and wide. I met Helen while the managing editor of the Lanier County News, and I quickly learned that as the Flatlander Frolic neared, I was going to get all the good, clean, error-free copy I wanted, a godsend for a weekly newspaper. Years later, as a newspaper adviser at Georgia Southern, the talented newspaper staff that had won the 1st place General Excellent award from the Georgia College Press Association the previous year was crushed by having finished either third or honorable mention, and Helen's ABAC Stallion newspaper has finished out of first, a rarity. I tried to console our students ABAC Stallion weekend, pointing out that once you made the final cut, the ranking were then often a tossup, depending on the biases of the judges. Little did I know what was in the works with Helen, who had spied something funky in the tabulations, then twisted some arms for a recount, which carried ABAC into first place. Helen's tide lifted all boats, and that Monday, we learned the recounts had also pushed GSU into first in its division, boosting my stock once again. Thank you again, Helen.

Robert Bohler - December 21, 2019 at 05:52 PM



“ A New Sunrise Spray was purchased for the family of Helen Lanier Strickland.



December 21, 2019 at 08:34 AM



“ Ms. Helen was our landlord when we first moved to Lakeland in 1989 and a good friend, supporter and mentor throughout our time there. What a great lady!

Rob Stone - December 21, 2019 at 07:55 AM



“ What a treasure! Helen was so welcoming to me when I was a young professional in the community. Her advice, candor, encouragement, creative solutions to problems and overall energy made quite the impression on me. I admired her organization around the flatland fall frolic and her tenacity in bringing a community together. She certainly left the world better than she found it. Thinking about your family...And the reunion with she and John Willie In heaven.

Katrina Bowers - December 21, 2019 at 07:55 AM



“ We have so many memories of Ms.Helen. She was a pillar in our church and community. We were blessed to be the recipients of her humorous observations and occasionally her advice. She was loving and giving. Our thoughts and prayers are with you. God bless and Godspeed Ms.Helen.

John and Tina Fitton - December 20, 2019 at 09:28 PM



“ Jo Ann Boyd Moreno lit a candle in memory of Helen Lanier Strickland



jo ann boyd moreno - December 20, 2019 at 07:11 PM



“ Ellen McDowell lit a candle in memory of Helen Lanier Strickland



Ellen McDowell - December 20, 2019 at 06:55 PM



“ Emerald Garden Basket was purchased for the family of Helen Lanier Strickland.



December 20, 2019 at 06:42 PM



“ Pamela Brewington lit a candle in memory of Helen Lanier Strickland



Pamela Brewington - December 20, 2019 at 04:41 PM



“ Ms.Helen and I had lots of things in common. We loved Coca-cola stuff, 4H, the class of 1985, and the Dawgs! Lots of memories... She will missed! Thinking of you and Julie B and your families.



Ginger Griffis - December 20, 2019 at 04:14 PM



“ Lanier County has lost one fine lady, but heaven has gained a wonderful angel. She lived for her children and grandchildren and was a friend to all. She will certainly be missed. I'm proud to have many memories of working with her. Love and prayers for Jay Jay, Julie B and their families.

Debbie Frazier Mosier - December 20, 2019 at 03:32 PM



“ So sorry for you loss. Prayers sent.
William and Nancy Gilliard



William and Nancy Gilliard - December 20, 2019 at 03:15 PM



“ With Heartfelt Condolences...
John & Sharon Meriweather...



Sharon Meriweather - December 20, 2019 at 02:44 PM



“ Terry Moore lit a candle in memory of Helen Lanier Strickland



Terry Moore - December 20, 2019 at 02:10 PM



“ Never really meet her, but know a lot about her sweet lady, always speaking, smiling, and just all around good woman. sorry for yalls lost

The eubanks - December 20, 2019 at 02:55 PM



“ Justin Anderson lit a candle in memory of Helen Lanier Strickland



Justin Anderson - December 20, 2019 at 02:01 PM



“ Mrs. Helen was a true Lanier County treasure. She will be missed by many. Love & Prayers for all of the family.

Judy Frazier Daugharty - December 23, 2019 at 07:52 AM



“ Jay Jay, Julie B and family - our sincere condolences on the loss of a wonderful mother and grandmother. And to Marilyn and I a wonderful friend. Let it be said, “She was a damn good Dawg!

Jim Watson - December 20, 2019 at 01:21 PM