

Cecil Earle Benton



July 31, 1923 ~ March 9, 2021

Cecil Earle Benton, a longtime community and business leader in Denham Springs, passed away peacefully March 9, 2021 at his home at LaPlantation Retirement Community in Denham Springs. He was 97. Born on July 31, 1923 to Leslie Newell and Sammie Brecheen Benton, the fourth child of six, he was a native of Denham Springs and lived on family property from many generations past. He graduated from Denham Springs High School as valedictorian of the Class of 1940 and then pursued a college degree at Southeastern Louisiana College in Hammond where he obtained a BA degree in 1946 with a major in mathematics and minor in Social Science. His college studies were interrupted by WWII when he enlisted and served in the Army Air Corp which later became the US Air Force. His three older brothers were also in the Army Air Corp and wished to follow in their footsteps. After completion of advanced aviation training, he was promoted to 2nd Lt. and served as navigator on a B-29. After the war, he married his college sweetheart, "Nook" Bencaz, in July 1946 and joined his dad and brother in the family business later becoming the manager then owner of Benton Bros Furniture now called Benton Bros Antiques Mall. His life was devoted to his family and service to his church and community. Earle grew up singing with his family plus singing four-part harmony with his older brothers.

He continued sharing that gift with First Baptist Church of Denham Springs where he started singing in the choir at the age of 12. As an adult, he sang for many events, weddings, and funerals with his smooth and effortless voice. He started teaching Sunday School when in his twenties and was still teaching every week until the flood of 2016 when he was 93. When Denham Springs became a city in 1957 he ran to be on the first Board of Aldermen and won. He then served for two four year terms, 1958-62 and 1962-66. He helped organize and was a charter member of Denham Springs Kiwanis in 1954 and was the President in

1958. As an active member of Kiwanis, he was involved in securing an invitation extended to the Denham Springs Boys Choir under the direction of Regina Walker to sing for the Kiwanis International Convention held in Atlantic City, NJ during the summer of 1963. He remained a faithful member of Kiwanis well into his 90s.

Earle's love of and commitment to the business community of Denham Springs led him to become the President of the Denham Springs Chamber of Commerce in 1955. Beginning in the 1950s, Earle and many longtime community business leaders, Pastors, and other friends met every weekday morning at 9 a.m. at a local bank for coffee, friendship, and to solve the world's problems one day at a time.

His active commitment to business, schools, churches, and the arts continued through the decades. Until the flood of 2016 he could be found at his downtown business on most days where he enjoyed greeting customers and talking about the early days of Denham Springs.

He is survived by son: John Benton, Sr. (Madelyn), daughter: Emily "Cissy" Benton Grantham (Glynn); 7 grandchildren: Kathy Benton Harris, Emily Benton Barclay (Adam), Brian Waldrep (Jeanell), John Benton, Jr. (Johanna), Will Benton (Kellie), David Waldrep (Kellen), Michael Benton; 14 great grandchildren; sister in law: Bettye Sandifer Benton; and numerous nieces and nephews and cousins. Preceded in death by his wife: Henrietta "Nook" Bencaz Benton; brothers: Leslie "Les" Benton, Jr., Milton "Mit" Benton, Carey Benton, William "Bill" Benton and sister: Grace Benton Fremstad.

A special thank you to the loving staff of LaPlantation, Dr. Ted Kemp, and to his excellent caregiver, John Brady. Visitation will be held at First Baptist Church, Denham Springs, Saturday, March 13, 2021 11 am - 1 pm with the service following at 1 pm. Burial will be in Evergreen Memorial Park. Pallbearers will be Grandsons: Brian Waldrep, John Benton, Jr., Will Benton, David Waldrep, Michael Benton, Adam Barclay.

If you wish to make a memorial donation please consider First Baptist Church of Denham Springs. Please sign the online guestbook at