

# THE LIGATURE

THE TIE THAT BINDS



*Official Publication of the*

*John A. Gupton College Alumni Association*

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(We are building our  
database)

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[padgett@guptoncollege.edu](mailto:padgett@guptoncollege.edu)  
[allen@guptoncollege.edu](mailto:allen@guptoncollege.edu)

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## President's Letter

Dear Gupton Alumni:

This is an exciting time at John A. Gupton College! Spring is here and we're making plans for the Alumni Association Reunion August 2 -3. I hope you have marked your calendar to attend this year's event. It will be fun, informative and entertaining!

I had the opportunity to meet several of our newest alumni in recent months. One of my biggest regrets is that I waited until recent years to become involved in the Alumni Association. I encourage each recent graduate to take an active role in your Alumni Association - now!

We are blessed with a great faculty and staff. President Steve Spann is leading the College to new levels of excellence. The Board of Directors has developed a vision for the future that will continue to influence and leave a positive mark on funeral service for years to come.

During a recent tour of the facility and its extensive renovations, I was impressed with the state-of-the-art renovations that will enhance Gupton's reputation as one of the leading educational institutions for funeral service in the country. Gupton College has always been known as "The Little Harvard" of funeral service education. The new facilities certainly live up to that name.

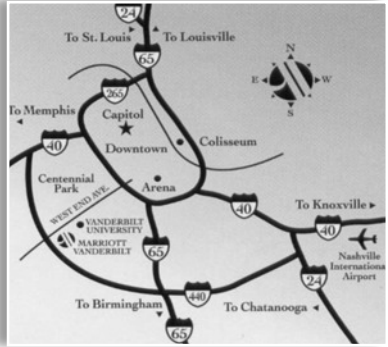
If you're like me, and have not been an active part of the Alumni Association - don't wait any longer. It's never too late to become involved. You can start by attending this year's reunion. Come tour the new facility, renew old friendships and prepare to be impressed with the direction your school is taking.

Warm Regards,

David Horner, 76'  
2012-2013 Alumni President



## Alumni Reunion



Directions: Take I-40 West to Exit 209A to Broadway. Turn left on Broadway, and straight to West End Avenue.

PLEASE CALL FOR FURTHER  
INFORMATION AND TO MAKE  
RESERVATIONS.

**800-285-0190**

It is time to start planning your return to Nashville, Tennessee for the Gupton College Alumni Annual Meeting and Reunion to be held **August 2 and 3** at the Nashville Marriott at Vanderbilt. Make your room reservations directly with the Nashville Marriott @Vanderbilt (1-800-285-0190 or 615-321-1300). A special rate of \$149.00 per night is extended to you when you mention the Gupton Alumni Association. Prevailing rates at the hotel are \$229.00. Reservations need to be made by Monday, **July 8, 2013**, at which time any unsold rooms will be released for sale to the public. Have your credit card ready to guarantee not only a room but a fun weekend in Nashville with the Gupton Alumni. Alumni dues and gifts to the endowment will be part of registration on Friday. Have questions? Contact the College, 615-327-3927.

## Annual Business Meeting & Dr. Yates Dedication

The business meeting will begin at 10 am at the college. We are launching a new tradition by honoring 25 year alumni. Welcome Class of 1988! We ask that you be present at the board meeting to receive your 25 year pin! We will continue our traditional 50 year pins during the meeting as well. Welcome Class of 1963.

After the business meeting Saturday morning, there will be a small dedication ceremony to honor Dr. Yates. We are hopeful that all alumni can attend this dedication ceremony to honor a great man that served Gupton College for many years.

## Announcement, Save The Date

The Virginia Funeral Directors Association - 125th Annual Convention, will be held July 7<sup>th</sup>-July 9<sup>th</sup>, at the Cavalier Hotel, Virginia Beach, Virginia. The VFDA are really excited about the alumni from John A. Gupton College that are from the State of Virginia, being able to attend. A special night for the alumni is being planned, from a variety of colleges. If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to give me a call at (804) 901-1082 or visit [www.vfda.net](http://www.vfda.net) for registration forms, calendar of events and times.



## Registration & Friday Night Event

Registration is from 3 pm - 6 pm (registration will be at the staircase in the lobby of Marriott) Friday night, **August 2nd** Reception sponsored by Wilbert begins at 6 pm and will last until 8 pm. There will be an open bar from 6 pm - 7 pm and a cash bar from 7 pm - 8 pm. Breakfast begins at 8 am Saturday morning sponsored by Aurora & Batesville Casket Companies.

Please Thank Our Sponsors



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## Saturday Night Event

We are attending Miss Jeanne's Mystery Dinner Theatre here in Nashville. This event provides a meal and entertainment. The doors will open at 6:45 pm and the show starts at 7 pm. Tickets are \$50 per person and checks should be made to Gupton College and mailed to the college no later than **July 8, 2013**. Seats are limited. If you want to check it out- you can visit her website at [www.missjeannes.com](http://www.missjeannes.com)



## Renovations Continue at Gupton College

As introduced in the last newsletter, renovations are still ongoing at John A. Gupton College. Since the last newsletter, there have been tremendous changes to take place on the upper floor of the building. After being completely gutted, which included all interior walls being removed, installation of aluminum studs were placed (which was seen in the previous newsletter), and complete re-wiring of the entire building, the improvements are now starting to show great progress.

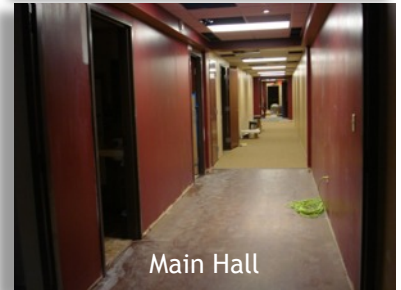


Classroom

The renovations are still in progress but we are hopeful to be complete by early summer. Carpet is currently being placed in the classroom and marketing room, the elevator is being installed and hopes are that it will be completed by the end of April. The exterior has received improvements in addition to the interior renovations such as: new windows with exterior stone accents and new front doors.



Faculty Hallway



Main Hall

## Scholarships Awarded

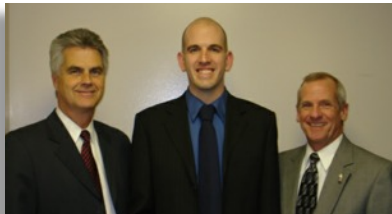
### TFDA SCHOLARSHIP

2012-2013 Tennessee Funeral Director's Association Scholarship was awarded to John A. Gupton student Bobby Cook of Portland, TN. Bobby is expected to graduate in December of 2013. Pictured are College President Steve Spann, Bobby Cook, and TFDA Executive Director Bob Batson.



### PAST PRESIDENT SCHOLARSHIP

The \$1,000 Past President Scholarship was awarded to George (Jim) Benuska. Jim lives in Nashville, TN. Jim serves as a class representative at Gupton College and is expected to graduate in December of 2013. Pictured with Jim are College President Steve Spann and Executive Director Bob Batson.



### SALES CLUB SCHOLARSHIP



The Tennessee Funeral Supply and Sales Club awarded Jason Wright of Columbia, TN a \$500 scholarship. Jason is expected to graduate from Gupton in December of 2013. Pictured with Jason is College President Steve Spann

### MAYES MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

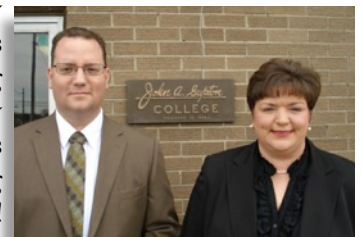
Caleb Leach, from Speedwell, TN, has received the \$1,000 Mayes Memorial Scholarship. Caleb is currently employed with Holley-Gamble Funeral Home in Clinton, TN and is currently a class representative at Gupton College. Caleb is expected to graduate Gupton in December of 2013.

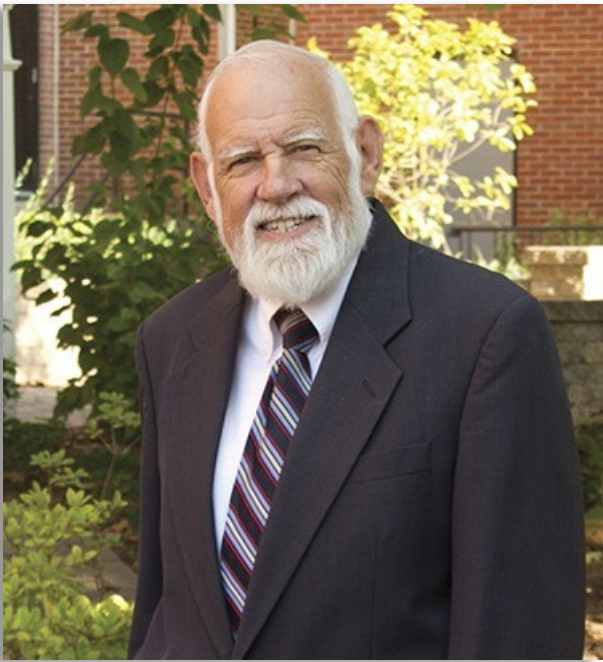


Congratulations Caleb! Pictured with Caleb are College President Steve Spann and TFDA Executive Director Bob Batson.

### STUDENTS FROM GUPTON ARE AMONG SCI SCHOLARSHIP FINALISTS

Bobby Cook and Cindy Blalock were selected as finalists for the SCI scholarship awards. Finalists were flown to Houston to meet different managers and Market Directors with SCI in addition to completing the interview process for the scholarship. Congrats to both of them for being selected as a finalist! It's also extremely important to note that this was the second year that Cindy was selected! Great Job Cindy! Pictured below are Bobby and Cindy. Bobby was awarded \$500 for being selected in the top thirty finalists and Cindy was awarded \$3,000 for being selected in the top fifteen!





## Dr. Harris O. Yates

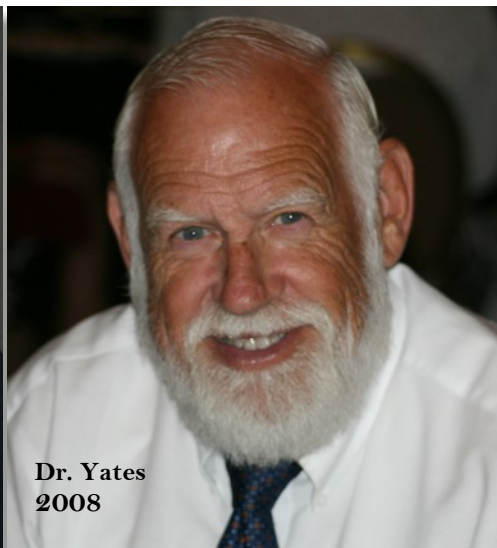
Dr. Harris Oliver Yates, age 78, passed away peacefully at his home in Brentwood, Tennessee on Thursday, January 24, 2013. He was born April 14, 1934 to the late Harry A. and Isabel Oliver Yates on the outskirts of Paducah, Kentucky.

Oliver was a devout Christian whose gifted passion was to learn about biology. After high school, he married his high school sweetheart, Betty Sue Watkins, and moved to Nashville to pursue a lifelong career in education. He obtained a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Cell Biology with a Minor in Chemistry from David Lipscomb College; a Master's degree in Biology-Botany with a Minor in Geology-Botany, Bacteriology & Cytology from George Peabody College for Teachers and a PhD. in Philosophy from Vanderbilt University in 1976, which was unique because it was hand written by the faculty.

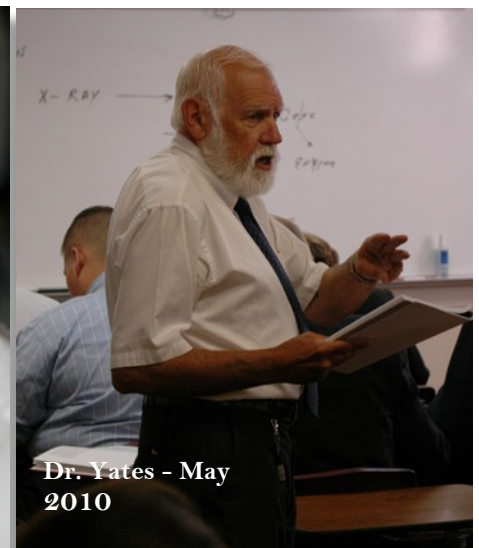


Dr. Yates began teaching Molecular Biology at David Lipscomb in the fall of 1957, eventually being named Chair of the Biology Department from 1972-1993. He retired full-time in 2011. He was instrumental with the growth of the college and often participated in grant writing and building programs. He became a national figure within the medical field for his research in paraganglioma, a tumor of neurological tissue which produces tremendous negative effects on the nervous system upon removal. Dr. Yates has helped in development of the pharmacology and treatment of patients who have had these removed. He was honored with fellow colleague Dr. Paul Langford as the Langford/Yates Distinguished Professor of Biology.

In 1958, a dear friend introduced him to a part-time teaching position at John A. Gupton Mortuary School. In 1960 he was appointed Chairman of the Academic Affairs Committee, a position he held until his death. In 1964 he became the Director of General Education when John A. Gupton Mortuary School was chartered and the name changed to John A. Gupton College. Dr. Yates, along with Mr. & Mrs. Gupton and other faculty, set a benchmark within the Funeral Profession by obtaining regional accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and being nationally accredited by the American Board of Funeral Service Education. He has worked extensively on five accreditations with S.A.C.S. & eight accreditations with the A.B.F.S.E. Dr. Yates has been as loyal to Gupton as he has Lipscomb. During his tenure at Gupton College, he was a model educator and a constant driving force for 100 percent alumni support and was instrumental in creating an endowment fund. The highest tier for the endowment fund at Gupton College is the Harris O. Yates Fund, dedicated for his tireless efforts for supporting John A. Gupton College.

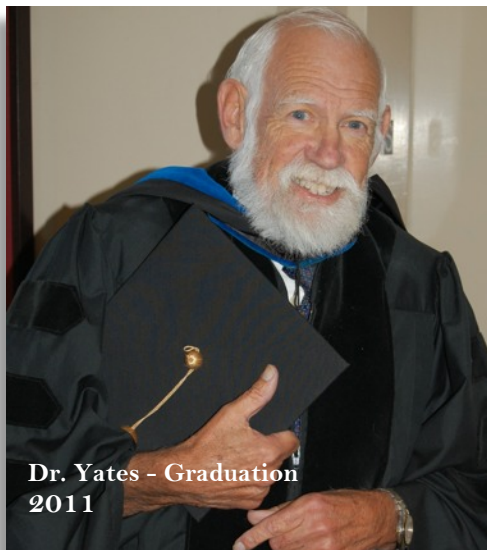


Dr. Yates  
2008

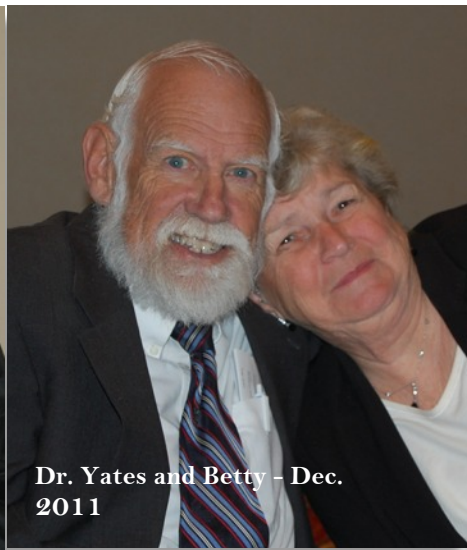


Dr. Yates - May  
2010





Dr. Yates - Graduation  
2011



Dr. Yates and Betty - Dec.  
2011



John, Steve and Dr. Yates - Nov.  
2012

Dr. Yates' greatest triumph and gift to society was his efforts to save an endangered lake from destruction. In the late 1950s, Dr. Yates began doing environmental studies at Radnor Lake, a man-made lake created as a livestock water source that was operated and owned by the L & N Railroad, southeast of the Lipscomb Campus. The lake was sold in 1962 to a private development company who wanted to build homes along the lake and turn it into a resort. Dr. Yates, along with other activists attorney Clark & Ann Tidwell and state naturalist Mack Prichard, began fighting to save Radnor Lake. In 1972, Dr. Yates, along with a few other dedicated citizens, presented a proposal to Governor Winfield Dunn explaining the biological importance and qualities of preserving an ecosystem such as Radnor Lake. These efforts ultimately resulted in the State of Tennessee purchasing and designating Radnor Lake as Tennessee's first Natural Area in 1972. Today it consists of more than 1,200 acres and is complete with walking and hiking trails, an observatory and a safe haven for area wildlife. Dr. Yates was awarded the Radnor Lake Environmental Award on April 15, 2012. The award is traditionally given to an individual who has demonstrated exceptional leadership and made notable, voluntary contributions in conserving Radnor Lake's precious resources and building public-private relationships.

His hobbies were gardening, fishing, boating, planting fruit trees, cultivating grapes and spending time with his family. He was a long standing member of Harpeth Hills Church of Christ, serving in many roles within this church family and, more recently, at Brentwood Hills Church of Christ. In addition, he was a founding member of AGAPE and Nashville Inner City Ministry. In 2010, Dr. Yates was diagnosed with Pulmonary Fibrosis, but handled his declining health with great dignity and with a positive outlook. In spite of the fact that he required full time oxygen in his final months, he requested the use of a microphone in order to continue to teach his students. He was preceded in death by his parents, a brother, William Alton Yates, and his first wife, Betty Sue Watkins Yates. He and Betty had three daughters; Cindy, Jana and Melodie. Betty passed away in 1998. In 2007, he married Betty Sue Brumback-Brigham. While mentoring Oliver's granddaughter Camille, they were set up on an ice-cream date that turned into a lasting friendship and eventual marriage. Oliver is survived by his wife, Betty B. Yates, daughters Cindy (Larry) Hunt, Jana (Steve) Shelton, Melodie (Rick) Ellison and step-daughter Heather (Josh) Tiffany; Grandchildren Chelsea (Michael) Lanier, Camie Hunt, Camille Wornock, Morgan & Jake Ellison and one sister Judy Atkins.

Visitation was held Sunday, January 27, 2013 from two o'clock until five o'clock in the afternoon and from seven o'clock until nine o'clock in the evening at Lipscomb University's Ezell Center Chapel. He was interred privately at Woodlawn Memorial Park. In lieu of traditional remembrances. Memorials may be made to the Yates Family Endowment of Lipscomb University or Friends of Radnor Lake.

*A majority of the information contained in this article was compiled from a personal inter-view with Dr. Yates on December 11, 2012 at his home in Brentwood by Opie Padgett, Editor of The Ligature, official newsletter of John A. Gupton Alumni Association.*

# Obituaries

**BELL, Carney Rickman**, Class of 1959, age 79, of Springfield, TN, passed away, Tuesday, February 19, 2013. Funeral services were conducted Friday, February 22, at 11:00 AM at the First United Methodist Church in Springfield, TN with Rev. Jeff Fryer, Dick Moore and Charlie Brinkley officiating. Burial followed in Bellwood Cemetery in Adams, TN. After the death of his father, Carney returned to Springfield and served with the late Tom Austin as owner and operator of Austin & Bell Funeral Homes,



becoming sole owner after Mr. Austin's death. He was a licensed Funeral Director and Embalmer. He continued working at Austin and Bell until his retirement in 2009. In lieu of flowers, Memorial contributions may be made to the Vanderbilt Life Flight or Nashville Rescue Mission. All donations may be sent in care of Austin & Bell Funeral Home. AUSTIN & BELL FUNERAL HOME IN SPRINGFIELD (615) 746-4433; Read Full Obituary at: [www.austinandbell.com](http://www.austinandbell.com)

**WILLIAMS, Mr. William O. "Billy"**, Class of 1950, of Soperton, AL died Saturday morning, February 16, 2013. Mr. Williams was a lifelong resident of Soperton, AL. He was a longtime owner and operator of Sammons Funeral Home, Soperton. He was a member of the First Baptist Church. Survivors include his wife, Kadel Thomas Williams; children Pamela (Glenn) Powell, Soperton, Thomas (Bonnie) Williams, Waycross; grandchildren, Steven (Stacey) Powell, Soperton, Ciaira (Matt) Lott, Ft. Bragg, NC, Alexxis Williams, Waycross; great-grandchildren, Logan and Emily Powell, Soperton; siblings, Lawrence M. (Allene) Williams, Jr., Statesboro, Joyce Cullens, Sebring, FL, Greg (Lettie) Williams, Wedowee, AL, Robert (Yvonne) Williams, Auburn, AL; nieces and nephews. Services were held in the Chapel of Sammons Funeral Home at 11 a.m. Monday, February 18, with interment in Westview Cemetery, Soperton. Read Full Obituary at [www.sammonsfuneralhome.com](http://www.sammonsfuneralhome.com).



**MURPHY, Grady Lee**, Milan, Age 77 was born October 16, 1935 in Decatur County; he departed April 6, 2013. Grady was retired from the Milan Arsenal after 37 years, where he was in the guard department. He was a veteran of the U.S. Air Force and currently served as CEO of Medina Funeral Home and Music City Mortuary. Grady leaves his wife of 50 years Helen Fuller Murphy, sons: Jeff, 86' and Stephane Murphy, Steve Murphy, 89', granddaughter; Hannah Murphy, great grandchild; Bella, brother; Troy Murphy, sister; Melba Tillman. Services were 1 pm Tuesday April 9, 2013 from the chapel of Medina Funeral Home, with Pastor Ronnie Ragan officiating. Interment was held 1 pm Wednesday, April 10 at the Middle Tennessee State Veterans Cemetery, Nashville, TN. Read Full Obituary at [www.medinafuneralhome.com](http://www.medinafuneralhome.com)



**Robert Fentress Casey, Class of 1948**, age 87, passed away Thursday evening, March 21st at his home in Oak Ridge, TN. Mr. Casey was born March 8, 1926, and reared in Alamo, TN, the son of the late Robert E. and Mary Dodson Casey. As the son of a funeral director, he worked from an early age with his father in the profession. In 1991, Casey Funeral Home in Henderson was purchased by the Shackelford family. Mr. Casey is a graduate of Chester County High School and attended Freed-Hardeman University. He served in the U. S. Army during World War II aboard hospital ships Seminole and Algonquin as a surgical technician. He is a **1948** graduate of



John A. Gupton College, serving as president of his class. He is a past president of John A. Gupton Alumni Association and a longtime member of the Board of Trustees of the College. In 1993 he was awarded a 50 year service plaque from the Tennessee Funeral Directors Association, and in 2008 was recognized by the association as a "Legend in Funeral Service" and inducted to the TFDA's "Wall of Fame". He married the former Martha Belle Reid in 1950. They have two sons, Dr. Robert Casey and wife Kathy, and Jeff Casey and wife Marthanne, all of Oak Ridge; four grandchildren, Katy Casey McCall and husband Andy of Newnan, GA; and Reid Casey and wife Tara of Alpharetta, GA; and Jay and Will Casey of Oak Ridge, TN; two great-grandchildren Kyler McCall and Sloane Casey. He is also survived by two brothers, Ed Lynn Casey and wife Ann of Nashville, and Tommy Casey and wife Martha of Destin, FL.

Funeral services were held Sunday, March 24<sup>th</sup> at Shackelford Funeral Directors-Casey Chapel with Tony Hysmith, Dr. Roger Penn, and Dr. Billy R. Smith officiating. Burial was held in the Henderson City Cemetery with military honors.

Shackelford Funeral Directors – Casey Chapel  
Henderson, TN 731-989-2421

**MR. BOBBY GERALD YARBROUGH**, age 74, died Wednesday, April 3, 2013. Mr. Yarbrough was the father of Billy G. Yarbrough, Class of 1984, and (Linda) and grandfather of Brandon Yarbrough, Class of 2003, of Yarbrough Mortuary Services in Jackson. Billy also served as Tennessee Funeral Directors Association President in 2011-2012 as well as the President of the Tennessee Funeral Supply Sales Club in 2005-2006.



Mr. Yarbrough's visitation was Friday, April 5<sup>th</sup> and the funeral service was held Saturday, April 6<sup>th</sup> at Friendship Funeral Home

in Friendship, TN. Burial followed immediately at the Belle Vernon Cemetery in Friendship, TN.

**NEAL, Connie**, age 95, of Lawrenceburg, TN passed away Thursday, January 24, 2013 at NHC Healthcare of Lawrenceburg in Lawrenceburg, TN. She was a native of Lebanon, TN, former owner of North Funeral Home, and a member of Immanuel Baptist Church. She is survived by son, Charles R. Neal, **58'**, and wife, Vickie, Lawrenceburg, TN, one



Granddaughter, Debbie McAfee and husband, Darren, Leoma, TN; One grandson, David Neal, **93'**, and wife, Amy, Leoma, TN. Funeral services were held at 2:00 PM Sunday, January 27, 2013 at Neal Funeral Home, with Charles Dinkins and Michael Duff officiating. Interment will follow at Lawrence County Memorial Gardens in

Lawrenceburg, TN. Read Full Obituary at [www.nealfuneralhome.net](http://www.nealfuneralhome.net)

*Alumni Association*

John A. Gupton College  
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Nashville, Tennessee 37203

# John A. Gupton Alumni Association

[www.guptionalumni.org](http://www.guptionalumni.org)

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