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Robert E. "Bob" Benner

June 17, 1930 - Dec. 4, 2019

Robert E. "Bob" Benner, 89, of Morganton, NC, left us after a long battle with ALS, on Wednesday, December 4, 2019 to paddle the rivers and hike the hills of Heaven (we hope!). Born on June 17, 1930 in Birmingham, AL, he was the son of the late Rupert C. Benner and Earline Olson Benner.

Bob graduated with a BS from the University of Georgia and an MS from the University of Illinois.

He lived in Georgia and Florida, moved to North Carolina in 1964, and finally to Morganton in 1970 to join the faculty at Western Piedmont Community College.

He became a firm believer in experiential education. Bob developed and taught courses in backpacking, canoeing, hiking, and rock climbing. He led trips on the rivers and trails in the southeast. One of his greatest pleasures was taking others into the wilds. He retired in 1995 as Coordinator of Physical Education and Instructor Emeritus.

Bob served in the US Army during Korea. He authored and co-authored canoeing guide books of North Carolina. He founded the Carolina Canoe Club in 1968 which is still very active. Bob was an Instructor and Instructor Trainer for the American Canoe Association and the American Red Cross for many years.

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Bob was an avid environmentalist and never saw a tree that he didn't want to hug.

He served in many organizations over the years, including as Board Member of the Conservation Council of NC, Friends of State Parks, Friends of the Mountain to Sea Trail and Foothills Conservancy of NC, as well as others.

He was an active volunteer for many worthwhile causes important to him, such as the Blue Ridge Parkway, Christmas Cheer Bike Crew, Habitat for Humanity, American Red Cross, NC State Parks, the US Forest Service and for 34 years, as Coordinator of the Central Blue Ridge Task Force of the Mountains to Sea Trail where he helped plan, construct and maintain 74 miles of the trail.

He loved his church, serving in many capacities through the years such as Deacon, Youth leader, Sunday School teacher, yard maintainer and on various committees.

He enjoyed playing the recorder and woke classes up in the field with his rendition of "Morning Has Broken."

He was fortunate in receiving many forms of recognition of which the most rewarding were Morganton Man of the Year in 2000, American Canoe Associations Legends of Paddling, the NC Order of the Long Leaf Pine, and Presidents Gold Volunteer Award.

After retirement, he began to carve and carved many wood hiking sticks for friends over the years.

He is survived by his loving wife, Donna Ledford Benner; son, David C. Benner (Pat); daughter, Dawn B. Stryhas (Bart); step-son, Scott Reid (Sandra); grandchildren, Thaddeus and Keira Reid; Lindsay Samsky (Mike) and Brett Stryhas (Tiffany Delphus); great-grandchildren, Robbie Samsky and Chloe Stryhas.

The funeral service will be held at 2:00pm, Saturday, December 14, 2019 at First Presbyterian Church with the Rev. John Hagman officiating. The family will receive friends after the service in the fellowship hall. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to Foothills Conservancy.

Sossoman Funeral Home and Crematory Center is assisting the family with the

arrangements.

Condolences may be sent to the family by visiting www.sossomanfh.com.

Tribute Wall

No tributes added yet.