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William Max Hemphill

Oct. 20, 1934 - Aug. 29, 2020

William Max Hemphill, Sr., 85 of Morganton, North Carolina passed away peacefully at his home at Grace Ridge Retirement Community on Saturday, August 29, 2020. Born October 20, 1934 in Bridgewater, NC at his family home, he was the eldest son of the late William Clyde Hemphill and Kathleen Dantzler Hemphill.

“Big Max” as he was affectionately nicknamed was a graduate of Glen Alpine High School. Following graduation, he spent one year at Pfeiffer University where he played basketball. He loved telling and retelling the story of the time his team played the JV Duke team in Cameron Indoor Stadium. After one year, he joined and spent two years in the Army. Upon the completion of his service, he attended and graduated from Catawba College. He went on to receive a Master’s Degree from Appalachian State University.

Much of his career was spent working for the State of North Carolina, at what is now known as the J. Iverson Riddle Developmental Center, where he served as the first recreation director. His most cherished time was at ComServ; a not for profit that he started with a longtime friend that provided group home housing for people with disabilities. In his retirement, his greatest joys included his long and circuitous rides around Lake James with his grandsons and his brother, holding hands with Martha, and organizing recreational activities for the residents of the Memory Care Unit at

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He is survived by his wife of 64 years, Martha Guthrie Hemphill; sons, William Max Hemphill, Jr. (Brenda) and Matthew Dantzler Hemphill (of Charlotte, NC); daughter, Kennedy Hemphill Cogan (John) of New York , NY; grandchildren, William Max

Hemphill III, Ian Kennedy Hemphill, Elizabeth Anne Cogan, Lucinda Kathleen Cogan and Aidan Hemphill; brother Jimmy Davys Hemphill (Nancy); and a number of nieces and nephews.

There will be a private graveside service for family members.

Please direct cards to the attention of Max Hemphill, Jr. 1530 Robinhood Drive, Morganton, NC 28655.

Memorial gifts may be directed to any of the following organizations: Bridgewater Presbyterian Church, 5979 Old NC Hwy 70, Morganton, NC 28655; Burke Hospice & Palliative Care, 1721 Enon Road, Valdese, NC 28690; Blue Ridge Healthcare Foundation, 500 Lenoir Rd., Morganton, NC 28655; or North Morganton United Methodist Church, 990 Sanford Drive, Morganton, NC 28655.

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

Tribute Wall

No tributes added yet.