

Dr. Leonard C. Durrence

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Dr. Leonard Clifton Durrence passed away Saturday, Sept. 5, 2009, in Highlands, N.C., following a “magnificent” lifetime of service to God, family and community. He was 80 years old.

Funeral services will be 2 p.m. Sunday at Bull Creek Baptist Church near Claxton. Interment will follow in the church cemetery. Visitation will follow the service.

Dr. Durrence was born Nov. 6, 1928, in Daisy, Evans County, son of Cliff and Thelma Brewton Durrence. His father was a farmer, and his mother was a schoolteacher. The Durrence's moved to Pierce County in 1941 after the U.S. Government for construction of Fort Stewart purchased the family lands.

Dr. Durrence graduated from Blackshear High School, the University of Georgia and the Medical College of Georgia. Following a residency at Central State Hospital, he moved to Blackshear with his young family to begin a medical practice delivering hundreds of babies and treating a countless number of illnesses and injuries. He retired in 1995 after more than three decades in general practice. In the doctor's memoir, “An Hour By Sun,” he wrote: “My mission is to cure occasionally, to relieve often and to comfort always.” That creed carried over into every aspect of his life.

Dr. Durrence served many years as a deacon and Sunday school teacher at Emmanuel Baptist Church and, later, at First Baptist Church. He was a past-president of the Blackshear Rotary Club and completed several terms on the Blackshear City Council. The Blackshear-Pierce County Community afforded him its highest honor in 1996 when he was named “Citizen of the Year.” Dr. Durrence served many years as a trustee at Brewton-Parker College in Mount Vernon, a school founded by his mother's uncle. His medical office equipment was donated to the college's clinic upon his retirement and he and his wife, Alyce, established a scholarship there in her father's name.

Dr. Durrence served on the Georgia Medical Care Foundation and was a past delegate for the Medical Association of Georgia. The Durrence's gave of their time and talents, not just locally, but around the world. The couple traveled to Bangladesh as medical missionaries in 1976.

The Durrence's moved to the mountains of western North Carolina to enjoy their retirement years where he remained active, writing his memoir, and an occasional column for The Blackshear Times. The last one, offering his insight on the national healthcare debate, just appeared two weeks ago. He also performed with a readers theater group and often led the vespers service at College Walk retirement community in Brevard. He continued his passion for architecture, music, literature, gardening and art.

Dr. Durrence is survived by his wife of 54 years, Alyce Higgins Durrence, Highlands; his children: Debby Durrence, LaGrange, Cliff and Helen Durrence, Marietta, Jop and Lisa Durrence, Waycross and Tamara Barile, Franklin, NC; five grandchildren: Anna Brock, LaGrange, Sarah Darracott,

Emerald Isle, NC, Amy Durrence and Ross Durrence, both of Marietta and Constantina Barile, Franklin; a great-grandson, Aidan Brock, LaGrange and his sister, Macy Ann Durrence Cook, Waycross.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to the American Diabetes Association, P.O. Box 11454, Alexandria, VA 22312. J. Mellie NeSmith Funeral Home of Claxton is assisting with arrangements.