



## William D. Fortner

June 24, 1922 - October 5, 2013

William D. Fortner was born June 24, 1922, in McHenry, Mississippi. He was the youngest in a family of five children; preceded in death by his father, Turner Marvin Fortner, who died when Bill was two years old. His mother, Maude Jennings Fortner, raised her five children in Gulfport, Mississippi, while working in the cafeteria of Gulfport High School.

Bill's childhood left him with strong memories of family, work, and hardship. As with most depression era families, the economic woes of those days left lasting impressions on the Fortner children, leaving them with a strong work ethic and love of family.

Bill graduated from Gulfport High and attended Mississippi State before entering the Army to serve honorably in World War II in North Africa and Europe. During training in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Bill met the love of his life, Leonola LeBlanc. After the war, Bill returned to Baton Rouge, finished school at LSU, and married Lola in 1948. Their long, happy marriage lasted 65 years, until his death.

Bill and Lola raised four children as Bill pursued his career in management with United Gas and Entex. The family lived in several cities throughout the south including Jackson, Shreveport, St. Petersburg, Florida, Laurel, and New Braunfels, Texas. Bill retired to Gulfport as a Senior Vice President with Entex in 1988. Bill was an active member of the First United Methodist Church in all the places he lived, serving on various committees throughout the years.

Bill and Lola spent 18 years in Gulfport, until Hurricane Katrina blew them

back to Laurel, Mississippi, near their daughter, Missy. Bill enjoyed golf with his friends, boating, reading and visits with eight grandchildren, to whom he was known as "Pappy". To many other young cousins, nieces, and nephews, he will forever be "Honey Bill".

Bill was preceded in death by his mother and father; his brothers, Marvin Fortner and Henry Fortner; his sisters, Estelle Wilkes and Marty Ethel Holmes, all of the Gulf Coast.

Bill is survived by his wife of 65 years, Lola, of Laurel; his sons, Doug Fortner (Margie Mayfield) of Houston, TX; Tom Fortner (Marian) of Hattiesburg, MS; daughters, Missy Sanderson (Bill) of Laurel, MS; and Nell Fortner of Auburn, AL; grandchildren, Katy and Jesse McCraw; Laurel Harvin and Tyler Fortner; Alley Fortner; Will, Sam, and Ben Sanderson; beloved nieces, Linda Koury and Betty Malley; and by numerous other nieces, nephews, cousins, and friends.

A celebration of life will be held at First United Methodist Church of Laurel on Tuesday, October 8, at 11:00 a.m., with visitation in the atrium at 10:00 a.m. Bill will be laid to rest in Gulfport, Mississippi.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to: The W. I. Smith Fund, First United Methodist Church of Gulfport, 2301 15th Street, Gulfport, MS 39501.

# Tribute Wall

RT

“ I am so sorry to hear of Mr. Bill's passing. Mrs. Lola and family, my thoughts and prayers are with you.

Renee Townsend - October 20, 2013 at 08:23 AM

SJ

“ To the Fortner family, my prayers and deepest sympathy are with you during your time of loss. I have many fond memories of your family at the First United Methodist Church Laurel in the 70's.

Suzanne Taylor Jackson - October 16, 2013 at 12:36 PM

DG

“ Please accept my sincere sympathy at this time of loss. May God be with you.

Dr. Ken Grafton - October 09, 2013 at 09:46 AM

KC

“ Lola, Nell, Doug, Tom, and Missy....your husband/dad was an amazing man, loved by so many! I am so glad I got to be part of the family while you were in NB. Although I didn't see him much after you moved, he was always very special.  
Bless you all and with much love, Karen

Karen Chisum - October 07, 2013 at 09:05 PM

SB

“ Special thoughts for you in the death of your dad, Missy. May God comfort you and give you joy in your memories of him. Sharon Barham

Sharon Barham - October 07, 2013 at 02:31 PM