



## Curtis A. "Buck" Clayton

July 25, 1927 - April 4, 2016

Pawley's Island, South Carolina - July 25, 1927 - April 4, 2016 - A supreme gentleman with a tender heart, Curtis A. (Buck) Clayton was a loving husband, father and grandfather, and a positive, uplifting force for all who knew him. He was the middle son of Graham and Charlotte Clayton of Portsmouth, Virginia, and growing up in the Tidewater, his love of the sun and water came natural to him. And that meant fishing and catching crabs and boating on the Elizabeth River. In his early years, Buck — as he was known all his life — showed an athletic prowess that took him from gridiron captain and three-sports athlete at Woodrow Wilson High School to baseball letterman at Virginia Tech. After serving in the Army Security Agency, he met the love of his life, Betty Cook Clayton. Their relationship got off to an explosive start at Hercules Powder Company in Radford, Virginia, and the fuse continued to burn for the 64 years of their marriage. It was Betty who encouraged him towards his Master's in Hospital Administration from the Medical College of Virginia. His long career as a hospital executive extended from the University of Virginia hospitals in Charlottesville, to West Florida Hospital in Pensacola, to Hospital Corporation of America Division Vice-President in Richmond. So expert were his gifts in health care management — and in building relationships across the spectrum — he was sought out as interim CEO for more than a dozen hospitals across the country, including an international position in Rome, Italy. His staff there related that his favorite word was "grazie", and his simplest but greatest management gift was to show appreciation and inspire all caregivers from

housekeeper to nurse to physician. This human touch became Buck's trademark, both in his work and his family life.

All who worked with Buck knew his priorities; family was everything to him. For his three children, Debbie and Mark and David, he provided the strongest example of loyalty and unselfishness, as in his commitment to his parents, his mother-in-law Julia and his Aunt Louise. His example carried over to his faith, in leadership roles in the Methodist Church. His three children remember an affectionate father who laughed heartily, even at his own expense during nautical misadventures that thankfully dealt him only minor injury to both body and ego. His twelve grandchildren and one great-grandchild received his affection in abundance. In playful games of hide-and-seek, it was typical to hear him making chirping sounds in the bushes. Buck loved to tell his granddaughters how smart and pretty they were and loved to indulge in root beer floats and french fries with his grandsons. Each received the ultimate encouragement from their grandfather, who always believed the best in them.

What also endears Buck to his family is the way he enjoyed the variety and beauty in life. He could sit outside in the sun reading his biography of George H.W. Bush in the morning, and in the evening sit with Betty to watch Wheel of Fortune. Early on he had loved dancing with Betty to Big Band standards. Later in life, he loved following high school and collegiate athletics — UVA and Virginia Tech were favorites — and his remarkable memory was seen in his recall of player backgrounds and statistics. Buck's sensitive appreciation for beauty was also remarkable, whether it was for the dunes and surf at Pawley's, or classical music, or the sight and sound of birds and rain. His children have received this legacy of appreciation for the wonder of life.

Buck Clayton is survived by his wife Betty and his three children, Debbie, Mark and David, along with his grandchildren Lindsay, Elizabeth, Amanda, Matthew, Bud, Meagan, David, Laurin, Noah, Sydney, and Chelsea, and his

great-grandchild Georgia. We all will miss his loving, joyful presence but will be comforted by memories of his remarkable life.

A celebration of his life will be held at Pawley's Island Community Church on Saturday, April 9 at 11:00 am. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to Save the Children, 501 Kings Highway East, Suite 400, Fairfield, CT 06825. Please designate on your check the Stephen Patrick Clayton School built in Mali, Africa the school which was built in memory of Buck's grandson.

Sign an online guestbook at [www.goldfinchfuneralhome.com/obituaries](http://www.goldfinchfuneralhome.com/obituaries)

Goldfinch Funeral Home, Beach Chapel is in charge of arrangements.

# Previous Events

## Celebration of Life

APR 9. 11:00 AM (ET)

Pawleys Island Community Church  
PO Box 777  
Pawleys Island, SC 29585-0777

# Tribute Wall

WF

“ Condolences to the Clayton family. Our thoughts and prayers go out to your whole family. Psalms 147:3 says God, "heals the broken hearted, and binds up their wounds." May God bring you comfort and peace.

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**Williams Family** - April 13, 2016 at 11:22 AM

WF

“ Condolences to the Claytonfamily. Our thoughts and prayers go out to your whole family. Psalms 147:3 says God, "heals the broken hearted, and binds up their wounds." May God bring you comfort and peace.

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**Williams Family** - April 13, 2016 at 11:06 AM

TC

“ Although we have lost touch, Mr. Clayton and Betty must be lovely parents because they raised a great daughter, Debbie. She was one of the most popular students and was nice to everyone and very respected at T. C. Williams High School.

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**Tara Carey** - April 11, 2016 at 08:12 AM

RS

“ I met my share of parents growing up Debbie - I wish to GOD a lot more of them were like Buck: always friendly, positive, engaging; always a cheerful word for a clueless teen. Like you I know how it feels to lose (temporarily in the big picture) the greatest dad in the world. Men and women of Buck's generation faced perils aplenty - they had to be strong in every way. His love of water resonates with me - for 16 years the Santa Monica Bay scene was my spiritual oasis. Peace to you and your family and thank him every day!  
Randy "Chuck" Smith: TCW High; Charlottesville Dean's List; guitar slinger; Secret Service Officer; beachcomber; flawed christian; baseball caveman.

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**Randy Smith** - April 09, 2016 at 01:15 PM

MS

“ Mrs. Clayton; David and Family;  
I am so sorry to hear of Mr. Clayton's passing. He was a wonderful man and a person that I always looked forward to seeing during our annual "tax" visits.  
My thoughts and prayers are with you during this time of sorrow.  
Best regards,  
H. McRoy Skipper, Jr. CPA

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**McRoy Skipper** - April 08, 2016 at 03:41 PM



“ *Divine Peace Bouquet was purchased for the family of Curtis A. "Buck" Clayton.*



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April 08, 2016 at 02:33 PM



“ *A man I can truly call my idol...what a quality person....great memories of many good times..This world is better because of Buck Clayton.*

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**Keith Miller** - April 08, 2016 at 06:24 AM



“ *Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Curtis A. "Buck" Clayton.*



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April 08, 2016 at 05:59 AM



“ *Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Curtis A. "Buck" Clayton.*



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April 07, 2016 at 10:36 PM

JB

“ Mark,

*I was very sorry to learn of your father's passing. I know I never knew him but after reading his obituary, it's clear that he was a shining light in this world and will be in the next. What a wonderful impact and legacy he left behind!*

*Our thoughts and prayers are with you and your family during this emotionally difficult time. May the Lord bring you peace and many, many smiles with memories of all the good times.*

*God bless you, Clayton family.*

*Love,*

*Jon, Coreen, Karli and Ryann Boals*

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**Jon Boals** - April 07, 2016 at 02:54 PM

WU

“ *RIP Soldier !!!!  
Wayne Williams  
United States Marine Corps*



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**Wayne Williams - USMC** - April 07, 2016 at 08:24 AM

KC

“ *It was an honor to have taken care of such an upstanding gentleman. Rest in peace Mr. Clayton.*

*Ken, RN*

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**Ken Calagsing** - April 07, 2016 at 05:41 AM

DM

*Ken - You were an amazing caretaker. Thank you so much for your thoroughness and kindness! We've been wanting to send you a note. Thank you! Debbie*

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**Debbie Clayton Miller** - April 07, 2016 at 08:30 PM

MM

*To Debbie and the whole Clayton family: I was so saddened to hear of Mr. Clayton's passing. I see so much of him in his daughter Debbie who I have had the privilege of knowing since we were high school cheerleaders together. I was very fortunate to have spent time with Mr. Clayton as I was invited to go into DC with Debbie to view the Christmas trees when we were teens. Mr. Clayton was our chauffeur and was so kind to me. I am glad the world had his presence in it and that presence will continue to live on in his family!!*

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**Marilyn Buckner Martin** - April 09, 2016 at 08:34 AM

DM

*Thank you so much, Marilyn!*

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**Debbie Miller** - April 10, 2016 at 09:28 PM