



Dr. Clarence Donald Cheatham

August 22, 1923 - September 18, 2020

Dr. Clarence Donald Cheatham, 97, of Tullahoma, Tenn., passed away on Friday, Sept. 18.

Dr. Cheatham was an educator, scholar, writer and army veteran, and was a devoted husband, father, son, grandfather, brother, uncle, mentor and friend.

He was born on Aug. 22, 1923, in Flomaton, Ala., to the late Peter Wilson and Frances Pearl Donald Cheatham. He volunteered to serve in the U.S. Army Air Corps during World War II, achieving the rank of corporal and specializing in radar technology during its early days.

He was a graduate of Flomaton High School, and earned bachelor's degrees in economics from Howard College (now Samford University) in Birmingham, Ala., and in journalism from the University of Georgia in Athens. He also held master's and education specialist degrees and a doctorate from UGA.

Dr. Cheatham taught junior high and high school in the Dade County school system in Trenton, Ga., from 1952 until 1970. He was a professor of political science and history at Motlow State Community College in Tullahoma, Tenn., from 1970 until his retirement in 2014 at the age of 90. The honors center at Motlow is named for him.

In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his siblings: Annie Lou Phillips, Edward Cheatham, Pauline McConnell, Roy Cheatham, Pearl Renfroe, Judy Turberville, H.W. (Pete) Cheatham, Mary Davis and William R. (Bill) Cheatham.

He is survived by his wife of 60 years, Patricia Wheeler Cheatham; his daughters and son-in-law, Mary Ellen Cheatham and Carol and Larry Dornink; his grandchildren, Pierce, Anna and Caris Dornink; and several nieces and nephews.

Dr. Cheatham leaves behind a rich legacy of determination, persistence, kindness, humor, generosity, a strong sense of justice, a love of learning and his spiritual faith. He deeply loved his family.

Dr. Cheatham was buried with full military honors. Services and interment were private.

Arrangements are by Ryan Funeral Home & Crematory, Trenton, GA.

Tribute Wall

FR

“ Thank you for being the parent who always took care of me. I miss you so much, Dad. 💔
Frances

Frances - May 18 at 01:14 AM

NM

“ Dr. Cheatham was the absolute BEST teacher ever! He made every single class at Motlow engaging, interesting, and fun. His stories were always full of humor and lessons. He will be greatly missed. Class of 2002.

Nicole Mitchell - September 25, 2025 at 10:57 PM

TR

“ Great guy! Wish they'd have named Simon Hall after him. I still don't drive a Fiat! I know you gotta be smiling 😊

Tracey Rushbrook Rogers - May 09, 2024 at 01:09 AM



“ Dr. Clarence Donald Cheatham

October 09, 2023 at 03:12 AM

LR

“ *What a genuine gentleman! I worked with Dr. Cheatham for my 27 year tenure at Motlow. He was a master of language and a punster extraordinaire. I will treasure the memory of his sly smile and raised brow. Blessings to his family,*
Linda C. Rollins



Linda C. Rollins - September 27, 2020 at 12:01 AM

MC

“ *1 file added to the album LifeTributes*



Mary Ellen Cheatham - September 26, 2020 at 01:40 PM

AM

“ *I will always have fond memories of uncle Donald coming to visit growing up. Loved to hearing his stories! Instead of flowers we have decided to donate to some of the students here who lost all their supplies and books for school in Hurricane Sally. I believe he would have agreed with that ! Love to you all- Janet, Amy, David. Paul and Angela*

Amy Mcpherson - September 25, 2020 at 08:21 PM

DB

“ *Dr. Cheatham was a fine Christian gentleman! Worked with him at Motlow for several years.*

D J Brock - September 25, 2020 at 07:49 AM

RT

“ *Randall Morrison, Attorney / Tullahoma Tennessee purchased the Serene Retreat for the family of Dr. Clarence Donald Cheatham.*



Randall Morrison, Attorney / Tullahoma Tennessee -
September 24, 2020 at 04:31 PM

RM

“ *Dr Cheatham was the most inspirational professor I had in college. I would go on from Motlow to finish college and then law school. I would practice law and become a judge over the following years. I was in Dr Cheatham's history and political science classes in 1973 and 1974. I would also have the honor of guest teaching his classes from time to time after graduating law school and also teach business law and political science at Motlow and elsewhere in my own right. Dr Cheatham also taught my oldest daughter at Motlow and I was so happy she too had that honor.*

A greater historian never lived nor taught.

Besides a professor he was a friend...and an inspiration to all who knew him and learned from him.

To the family I can only say I take this loss hard and to heart. You had a wonderful person in your life in Dr Cheatham. We all had that privilege and honor in simply knowing him.

Love to you all....

*Randall Morrison, Attorney
Tullahoma, Tn.*

Randall Morrison - September 24, 2020 at 04:19 PM



“ 27 files added to the album *Life Tributes*



Ryan Funeral Home - September 24, 2020 at 04:07 PM



“ *Edna and Dale Tinker purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Dr. Clarence Donald Cheatham.*



Edna and Dale Tinker - September 23, 2020 at 04:20 PM

DH

“ *My Dear Friend and Former Teacher Mrs. Cheatham,
Don and I are so truly saddened to hear of Dr. Cheatham's passing. I missed having him as a teacher but was so blessed to have had you. I've heard wonderful things about Dr. Cheatham. What a great legacy he has left for all whose lives he touched especially his family. God blessed you both with many years together and the wonderful part is He has promised we will see our loved ones again. Our love and prayers for you and your precious family. Love in Christ,
Don and Dorothy Patterson Hicks*



Don and Dorothy Patterson Hicks - September 23, 2020 at 02:46 PM

JC

“ *Judith Ann and Buddy Fisher, Bobby, Faye Cheatham purchased the Sacred Duty Spray for the family of Dr. Clarence Donald Cheatham.*



Judith Ann and Buddy Fisher, Bobby, Faye Cheatham -
September 23, 2020 at 02:39 PM

DR

“ I worked with Dr. Cheatham for thirteen years and loved every minute of him. I recall most his telling people he was from LA (many assumed California), but he really meant lower Alabama. I recall him telling how he lost his finger, I recall him taking naps on his office floor, and so many more stories. God bless the family and may your memories pull you through your time of loss. Dr. Cheatham blessed thousands of people in his long life. Niles Reddick

Dr. Niles Reddick - September 23, 2020 at 01:02 PM



“ Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Dr. Clarence Donald Cheatham.



September 23, 2020 at 10:27 AM

JF

“ Uncle Donald was a special member of the Cheatham Family. I will miss his visits and phone calls more than you can know. He and my Dad (Edward) had a special bond that continued on with his care and concern for our family after the passing of my Dad. May you know that you were loved and your memory will carry on.

To my Aunt Pat, Mary Ellen, Carol and Family please know that you too are special and loved. Thanks for your untiring care to this special man.

Love and Prayers,

Judith Ann and Buddy

Judith Ann Fisher - September 23, 2020 at 10:00 AM

VB

“ Dear Patricia and family,
We are so sorry for your loss. Dr. Cheatham and you all have been wonderful neighbors who have always brought smiles. We will miss him. In sympathy, The Bjorns

Valerie Bjorn - September 23, 2020 at 09:55 AM

MS

“ Mike and Jenny Sims purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of Dr. Clarence Donald Cheatham.



Mike and Jenny Sims - September 22, 2020 at 08:21 PM

HR

“ Hope and Buddy Renfroe purchased the Sweet Tranquility Basket for the family of Dr. Clarence Donald Cheatham.



Hope and Buddy Renfroe - September 22, 2020 at 07:45 PM

JA

“ Patricia we send our thoughts and prayers to you and your family. Mr. Cheatham, to me, was one of my teachers at Dade County High. A very good, interesting teacher. Remembering you at this time.

Jerry and Linda Blevins Atkins

Jerry & Linda Atkins - September 22, 2020 at 07:43 PM

AP

“ *Ann P. purchased the Basket Full of Wishes for the family of Dr. Clarence Donald Cheatham.*



Ann P. - September 22, 2020 at 07:28 PM

JN

“ *I will always remember his kindness to my sister Frances, and his great gift of storytelling Jenny Renfroe Sims.*

jenny renfroe sims - his niece - September 22, 2020 at 05:53 PM