

On behalf of mom, and the rest of the family, welcome to the celebration of life for Billy Aldon Dixon.

Now the only people that ever called him Billy was his mother and the gov't. Maybe a teacher or two as he was growing up. But as I learned over the last few months the medical offices did as well.

Most of you know him as:

- Bill or
- Dean Dixon (as one obu maintenance man said to another that must have been new to the job, “that’s dean Dixon and he’s the dean”) I guess he thought his name was really Dean.

When Dan Grant ask dad to come with him in 1970 to Ouachita and be dean dad said, “Dan I don’t know anything about being the dean of students”. Dan said “good, I don’t know anything about being president, so we’ll learn together”. Upon arriving at Ouachita, he found that his predecessor had either taken or burned everything in the office that would have been good references for getting started. The only thing left was a handbook from 1954. Dad dug in, gathered as much info and examples from other institutions and in today’s vernacular, he

literally wrote the book on how to be dean at OBU. He loved his work. He loved being at an institution where the world was open to the students. Where there were endless possibilities that lay in wait for the students. I asked him a couple of weeks ago what was his favorite thing about being dean. He thought for a second and said, “seeing a rascal get straightened out”. As I have viewed comments that have being on social media, one in particular caught my attention. It simply said “Ouachita legend. He showed me respect at an age and time where I had not earned it”. I thought that was well said.

- B. Aldon Dixon (this is how he signed his name) though he has been called and received mail as Baldon a time or two.

But his favorite titles were

- Son of Ellis and Audrey
- Husband of Snookie
- Son-in-law to Vern and Betty Powers
- Bother in law to mom’s siblings
- Father-in-law to Dana and Misty
- Daddy Bull as the grandkids refer to him.

- Dad (to myself, Chris and Humoy)

But he was dad to so many more.

Students

International students especially

Those that travelled with him either on mission trips or his tourist groups

We need to offer thanks to so many of you for your:

- Prayers
 1. For dad (he was pain free and I attribute that to the prayer of Gods people that he be in comfort)
 2. For our family
 - The many meals prepared and delivered.
 - The many visits and phone calls. Dad loved those. Especially the ones from his Sunday school class who would come on Sundays and sit with him so mom could go to Sunday school and church.
 - His medical staffs, Dr. Haygood, Dr Muldon, Dr Sid, Arkansas Hospice, Baptist Hospital Arkadelphia, St Vincents Hot Springs
- Dad had a great appreciation for your profession. He appreciated your compassions and your straight talk.

- And a special thanks, of which we owe a debt that could never be repaid, goes to Humoy Ravshanov, our little brother. He has waited on, and taken care of both mom and dad, in these last months with what seems like endless energy. We can not thank him enough.
- Finally, thank you all for wearing mask as we navigate how best to hold this service. I am very appreciative and proud of our governor and state as we have progressed through these challenging times.

As I have contemplated over the last weeks what to say today, floods of stories and remembrances have come to mind. All worthy of sharing on this occasion. But as you can see from your order of service, dad has planned a full afternoon. I think he thought he was planning an itinerary for one of his trips. But alas we have tried to honor and carry out his wishes.

Instead of me telling you my stories or remembrances I'd like to give you a few of Dad's stories that I believe will undergird what you hear from the others that will share this afternoon. And likewise will give each of you a greater understanding of your own interactions with dad.

Dad was raised in northeast Georgia in a place called Habersham village. This was a mill town. Everything was

own by the mill, which was a cotton mill, the store, the housing, the school. Both of dad's parents worked there for their whole careers. They worked hard. Then they went home and worked hard again tending to their animals and gardens. They were very self-sufficient.

It was here that dad learned how to work hard. And as a matter of fact, he had jobs in both a grocery and hardware stores after school and on Saturdays.

It is where he learned to be honest.

It is where he gave his life to Christ.

It was also here that he saw his folks always open the doors and show hospitality to others. No one was turned away and most were asked to come in and have something to drink or eat.

Does that sound familiar to anyone?

My family took a heritage trip with dad and mom a few years ago to show the girls where their grandparents had grown up. As we were wrapping up the visit to the Habersham area dad said, "this was a great place to be from". I wish now that I had probed that comment a little more. I think there was a lot to unpack out of that statement and I just missed it at the time. But I believe he was saying that Habersham had given him his values and his faith, but it was not going to be able to give him the

opportunities he was searching for. Those would be found elsewhere.

There was a place on their property where the bed rock could be seen through the yard. It was a good-sized area. Large enough for him to lay on. He called it his wishing or daydream rock.

He told me, just a couple of weeks ago, when he was in 3rd grade his teacher at the company school gave him a National Geographic to take home. This particular edition had articles about American Indians. He looked at it from cover to cover. He was hooked. That kicked off his interest in other cultures and places. He would lay on that rock and dream of the peoples and places he would like to see.

Does this sound like the Bill Dixon you know?

The company school only went through 8th grade. For high school you went to one of the county high schools. Upon graduation dad was one of only two students that went to college. The other was the child of the mill owner. Kids were expected to work in the mill or the family farm. Many even before completing high school.

He was often asked by others in Habersham when he was “gonna stop that schooling and get a job”.

Through hard academic work and working on the side, dad made it through college. 2 years at truetts mcconnell and 2 at carson newman. He landed a teaching job back at truetts mcconnell in biology. In the summer of his second year of teaching, which was in 1961, he thought it would be a good idea to take his first international trip. It would be led by Hershal Hobbs who was the president of the southern Baptist convention at the time. It would be a 32-day trip taking in 10 countries. When dad told his folks, his mom cried because she thought he would get lost in some foreign country and never make it back home. His father was angry, which dad said was an emotion he rarely saw from his father. His father thought it was a foolish decision. And here's why, it would cost dad about 75% of his yearly wage to take the trip. His dad really thought he had lost his mind to make such a foolish decision as this. His mom thought that they had taught him to be wiser than this. It was under these circumstances that he set off on his first international trip.

Dad was the youngest member of the travel party which was made up mostly of couples who owned oil wells in OK and TX. Once they were in Jordan it was announced that Dr. Hobbs and his wife had invitations for 4 to go to

the royal palace where they would receive an official thank you from King Abdullah el Husim for the work that southern Baptist had done in the country with a hospital, nursing school, orphanage, and schools for both girls and boys. It was decided a lady that was a professor of Egyptian history would be joining the Hobbs and the group decided that dad should go as the fourth.

They arrived at the gate, presented the invitation, and were led to enter the palace. They were escorted down a long hallway by two uniformed guards. Their footsteps echoed of the marble floors. Ornate decorations were everywhere. This was an environment dad had only seen in pictures or movies.

At one point Dr. Hobbs looked at dad and said,
“Bill, you look a little ill at ease”

Dad replied

“Dr Hobbs I am just a young boy from Habersham, a cotton mill town in Georgia and I have never in my life been exposed to anything like this or anyone of this importance.”

With a smile on his face and a little bit of arrogance in his voice Dr. Hobbs said

“Remember Bill, he goes to the bathroom just like you and me”

They went on to greet the king and share a Turkish coffee around a low table. Dad said this experience had a profound impression on him and opened his eyes to a world he had never dreamed of experiencing. It became a peg on which he hung the philosophy that

- God made us all,
- that we are more alike than different,
- and every man or woman has worth in the eyes of the Lord no matter what station in life they come from, or in what situation they find themselves.

Whether a country boy from Habersham or a king from Jordan.

Does this sound like the Bill Dixon you know?

If not, then let me tell you about Buddy Phillips. Buddy was a student of dad's at Belmont where he taught biology. Buddy was a philosophy and ministerial student and he worked 40 hours a week to make it through school. He was the all-American guy. Great personality, good looks and smart. The girls were disappointed to find out he had married in his freshman year.

Dad required a good bit of lab time for his biology class and he and Buddy quickly developed a good friendship. So much so it wasn't long until they were discussing pretty deep and personal issues. It came to light that his wife was not happy about his working so much, or of his dedication to God and the ministry. He dropped a class and reduced his work hours to spend more time with her, but nothing seemed to satisfy her desire to get out of the marriage. She eventually left him, and this was a crushing blow to Buddy.

Some time later Buddy stopped by Dad's office to tell him he was dropping out of school and was volunteering for the green berets in Vietnam. This was in the 1965-66 time period. Dad knew that Buddy would not have made this decision without much thought and prayer, though he tried to make an argument not to go. Months went by, and dad would get reports from Buddy's brother from time to time. Then one day his brother came to dad office and informed him that Buddy had been killed in a heated battle. Dad had lost a dear friend and cried uncontrollably and unashamedly for a while.

Once buddy's body was returned there was a memorial service held. At the service, the pastor read a letter that

buddy had given his brother which was to be opened only if he did not return.

---Read from book dad's comments about Buddy's funeral and burial---

Regarding living life in capital letters. Does this sound like the Bill Dixon you know?

In closing let me tell you about what I think was dad's favorite room.

When Dana and I were living in South Africa many moons ago, we attended a mission meeting. There was a speaker that came in for the meeting. This was the comment to lead off the first night.

It is our responsibility to deepen our relationship with God, and it is his responsibility to broaden it.

This was a good reminder for the missionaries gathered and quite frankly a good reminder for all of us.

So, what was dad's favorite room? What he called the study.

This was the room where he and mom would start their day with devotions, scripture reading and prayer. And a cup of coffee.

This would be the deepening his relationship with God part.

It was also where he would start his communications with the world almost every day when he was home. Letters, cards, emails, facebook, text, Instagram, what's app. You get the picture. He was a great communicator.

I am convinced the rest of the house is only there to be used as a ploy to get guests into the study. Once there he could visit (ask about your family, career, etc) just get to know you. He could disciple, counsel, discipline (Chris and I know a thing or two about that), and study for the many Sunday school classes he taught over the years. He would also retreat to the study when he received phone calls, once it was evident he was going to be on the phone a while.

He also had satellite studies in the offices that he had on campus. Sure, he had a desk, but there was always a sitting where he wanted to make you feel as comfortable as possible. Whether you were there just for a visit or whether you were asked to come see the “dean” for other reasons. Just like his house study has a fireplace, he installed a fake fireplace in those offices. Complete with a

mantle he had salvaged when they tore down Old North Dorm.

This is where the second part of the comment flourished and grew over the years. God broadened his relationships with dad to an extent that we may never know the scope of. This is evidenced by those of you gathered here today and by the all the many communications dad received from all over the world in these last months. (his phone)

He would be so pleased to see you all here today. The only thing that could make it better is if we could all fit in the study and have a glass of tea or cup of coffee.