



John Carlton Rankin

January 23, 1941 - September 27, 2025

John Carlton Rankin, 84, died at Emory St. Joseph Hospital, Atlanta, Georgia, Saturday, September 27, 2025. He was born near Piedmont, Alabama on January 23, 1941, to John Melvin Rankin and Nanette Ophelia Davis Rankin. He is survived by his wife of fifty nine years, Donna Margaret Salls Rankin; his sisters Ellen June Rankin Smith (Mack) and Hazel Theresa Rankin Kisor (Waylan); his nieces Valerie Theresa Kisor Chittom (Park), Karen Young Kisor, Kim Smith Marketich, and Rhonda Smith Germano (David); great nephews Park Thetford Chittom III and William Kisor Chittom, Daniel Hammett (Morgan), and Adam Hammett (Emily); great nieces Emily Renee Kisor Ray (Chris) and Pamela Hammett Floyd (Steven); brother-in-law Donald Joseph Salls II (Becky); sisters-in-law, Cherie Salls Schmidt (Scott) and Trisha Salls Conyers (Eddie); niece Justin Griess Williams(Craig); nephews Joseph Salls, Elliott Salls (Noelle), Adam Salls (Anna), Hayden Griess (Trisha) and Beau Griess (Stephanie); great niece Margaret Salls; great nephews Jackson Williams, Salls Williams, Griffin Williams, and Pierce Griess; as well as many other special relatives. He was preceded in death by his parents, his brother, Randall Davis Rankin; his niece Paula Smith Vatcher ; nephews Jeffery Andrew Kisor and Craig Smith, and his in laws, Dr. Donald Salls and Margaret Salls.

Carlton attended Piedmont City Schools, graduating in 1958, and established an outstanding athletic career which included recognitions as All County First Team (1957and 1958), Calhoun County Back of the Year (1958), All State, All

Southern, All American as well as Class 3 A Back of the Year. After graduation from high school, he earned his Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration (1963) at the University of Alabama where he was also signed to an athletic football scholarship by the legendary Paul (Bear) Bryant, In addition to the University of Alabama regular schedule, he also played in the 1960 Blue Bonnet Bowl, the 1962 Championship Team (National Champions), the 1962 Southeastern Conference Game, the Orange Bowl, the Crusade Bowl, the College All Star Game and was chosen by Coach Bryant to play in the All American Bowl Game in Buffalo, N.Y. in 1963 and to serve as Captain of the University of Alabama team at homecoming his senior year.

Carlton served as Assistant Coach at the University of Alabama in 1964 and was, in 1965, hired as Assistant Backfield Coach at Jacksonville State University. This JSU team had the distinction of being selected to play in the Space City Classic which was the first bowl for JSU since the 1948 Refrigerator Bowl.

Carlton was an active member of the Mt. Vernon Baptist Church where he and his wife, Donna, were involved supporters of the Wears Valley Ranch for Abused Children, a Christian Residential Home which borders the Great Smoky Mountains, and Brumby Elementary School program for under privileged children.

Utilizing his business degree, Carlton's career centered around financial endeavors as well as real estate.

While enjoying golfing, Carlton often teamed up with Alabama coaches that included, not only his coach, Bear Bryant, but Coach Nick Saben as well. A favorite partner was his father-in-law, Dr. Don Salls, a 1940's University of Alabama football player and distinguished Jacksonville State University Coach. Both Carlton and Dr. Salls were selected to the Calhoun County Sports Hall of Fame and both were members of the elite A Club.

A devoted husband and uncle, Carlton had strong Christian values evident, not only his family, but to friends as well .

A celebration of Carlton's life will be held Sunday, November 9, 2025, at 2:00 p.m. at the First United Methodist Church Tucker Family Life Center, 300 North Main Street Piedmont, Alabama (36272). Rev. Mickey Morgan will officiate.

Memorials may be made to Wears Valley Ranch, 100 One Free Place, Sevierville, TN 37862 or to The Carlton Rankin Scholarship, Piedmont Education Trust, P.O. 819, Piedmont, Alabama 36272.

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

NOV 9. 2:00 PM (CT)

Tucker Family Life Center -First United Methodist Church
300 North Center Avenue
Piedmont, AL 36272

Tribute Wall



“ *Connie Frost sent a virtual gift in memory of John Carlton Rankin*



Connie Frost - November 04, 2025 at 05:20 AM