

Donald Jack “Don” Banks



Donald Jack “Don” Banks, 91, was called to heaven to continue peanut research and to have donuts and coffee with our Lord Saturday June 25, 2022. In his own words, “Life Gets Teejus, don’t it.’ It was more complicated that I thought it would be. However, on the other hand, I’ve been a lot luckier than I deserve! Sometimes, it’s good to end in a draw!” A celebration of life will begin at 10:30 a.m. Saturday, August 6, 2022 at the Highland Park United Methodist Church, 523 S Stallard, in Stillwater, OK. Strode Funeral Home and Cremation is in charge of arrangements.

He was born to Jesse Culberson and Grace Melvina (Bale) Banks July 11, 1930, in Sentinel, OK. He grew up on the family farm west of Sentinel. Chores included chopping cotton and feeding the chickens, turkeys, ducks, pigs, cows and horses. He loved playing with neighboring kids and developed lifelong friends. One time, they were playing bombs away when he was hit in the head with a brick. Dr. Harry Wilkins, MD, a surgeon from the OU Medical School, flew in to perform brain surgery to put his “marbles back” in his head and saved his life.

He attended Port (Consolidated) School, “The Tigers,” for 11 years and graduated from Sentinel High School, “The Bulldogs,” in 1948. He was a member of the basketball and baseball teams at both schools, Bulldog Hi Times business manager, Bulldog Editor, and played the saxophone in the high school and college bands. He was active in 4-H, Boy Scouts, and the FFA. He remained in contact with most of his classmates, including his best friends, Bill Nichols and Bill Tom Leonard. He submitted many school days articles printed in The Sentinel Leader.

Don continued his education to pursue a career in radio broadcasting. He struggled his first semester and his brother, Jess Banks, Jr. suggested he try something involving farming. Heeding that advice, he switched majors and graduated in 1953 with a B. S. in Agriculture from Oklahoma Agriculture and Mechanical College. He was a member of the ROTC, president of the Agronomy Club, sergeant-at-arms of Alpha Zeta (Agriculture), and treasurer of Kappa Kappa Psi (band). He was a member of the OAMC’s intercollegiate crops judging teams for both the Kansas City Royal and Chicago Intercollegiate contests. In 1952, the team took second place in Chicago, IL.

Brook’s Drug was one of his favorite places to have a piece of pie and a cup of coffee. There he met Eneth Ann “Sally” Randolph. They were married May 22, 1952, and had two children Michael Douglas “Mike” Banks and Sandra Kay Banks “Sam or Sammie” Rosecrans. Don and Sally were divorced in 1988 and renewed their friendship after Sammie passed away in 2012.

He was a veteran of the Korean War and was stationed stateside. He entered the flight school for fixed and rotary winged aircraft. He completed his active service at Camp Hale, CO, with the Mountain and Cold Weather Training Command. He flew the Cessna L-19 "Bird Dog" and Canadian DeHavilland L-20 "Beaver," both light aircraft and the Bell H-13 "Whirly Bird (similar to Mash) and Sikorsky H-19D-3 "Chickasaw," helicopters. He piloted many missions, including rescuing railroad men stranded in deep snow in the Cumbres Pass, CO, dropping relief supplies for climbers at Devils Tower, WY, dropping men and supplies to fight forest fires, searching for downed aircraft and even transported a sick horse. He was honorably discharged from the US Army Reserve as Captain in the Infantry.

He earned a M. S. in Agronomy from Oklahoma State University in 1958 and earned the first Ph.D. in Botany from University of Georgia (UGA) in 1963. He was a member of the Phi Sigma Society and the Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi. He was a faculty instructor at Auburn University, Auburn, AL, University of Texas at Austin, TX and Stephen F. Austin State College, Nacogdoches, TX.

In 1966, he returned to Stillwater, OK to work for the USDA in cooperation with Oklahoma State University to conduct research on nematode resistance for cultivated peanuts until his retirement in 1990. He made four expeditions to South America to collect wild peanut varieties. He, along with Dr. James Kirby, released four varieties of peanuts. He had over 120 scientific publications and presented more than 40 formal papers at national scientific meetings. He was a member of the Crop Science Society of America, American Botanical Society, American Society for Plant Taxonomists, Sigma Xi Research Society, and American Peanut Research and Education Society. Don was elected a Fellow of the American Peanut Research and Education Society in 1988 and received the National Peanut Council's Research and Education Award in 1991. He truthfully said, "I worked for peanuts most of my life."

Over the years he had many interests, including plant specimen collecting, photography, film developing, square dance calling, flying, reading the Bible and traveling. He published a book of poetry, Scripture Power Poems. He enjoyed eating donuts and drinking coffee with many of his friends. He became a square-dancing ding-a-ling and a member of the Red Red Rose, Purple Onion and Quiet Birdman. He played as hard as he worked.

He is preceded in death by his parents, brother, daughter and friend, Bill Nichols. Don will be missing from all of us including, Sally, Mike (Anne Matoy), five grandchildren, Joseph Banks, Jackson (Casey) Longan, Scott Banks, Jacob (Jessica) Longan and Lisa (Zach) Bahr, six great-grandchildren, Autumn Banks, Taylor and Luke Longan, Kaylee and Caleb Bahr and Dean Banks and friend, Bill Tom Leonard.

Donald Jack Banks belonged to the Hanner-Sharp American Legion Post 129 Stillwater.