

Mississippi's longest-serving mayor dies of COVID-19

Associated Press Mississippi's longest-serving mayor died Thursday of complications from COVID-19. Dock Gabbert of Derma was 78, said Pam Odom, one of his sisters. She said on Facebook that

graveside visitation and Gabbert's funeral service will be held Sunday at Pine Crest Cemetery.

Gabbert died at Baptist Memorial Hospital in Columbus, Lowndes County. Coroner Greg Merchant

said. "Mayor Gabbert was suffering from Covid 19," he wrote in an email. Gabbert was in his 14th term as mayor of Derma, WTVA-TV reported. The Mississippi Municipal League had given him a plaque in 2014 recognizing him as the state's longest-tenured mayor, the Daily Journal reported.

"I was a young kid and made a remark that there was grant money out there and we should have a sewer system," Gabbert told the Daily Journal in 2015. "Somebody told me I ought to run for mayor. So I did." Odom said in a private message that her brother is survived by his wife, one son, one daughter, two granddaughters, one grandson, one brother and three sisters.

Derma, a town in Calhoun County, is about 55 miles (90 kilometers) northwest of Columbus.

The state reported 2,756 new cases and 40 deaths on Thursday, with nearly 148,000 confirmed infections and 3,825 deaths confirmed as caused by the novel coronavirus.

One day earlier, Mississippi reported a single-day high of new coronavirus cases, with more than 3,000. Health officials warned that they expect worse to come, partly because of holiday gatherings.

Odom posted on social media Wednesday evening that he had been removed from a ventilator after "an insurmountable battle with COVID-19 and Covid Pneumonia," the Daily Journal reported.

Gabbert, who was first elected mayor in 1969, was usually unopposed for reelection but won one contest by only two votes, the newspaper wrote. He had planned to retire in 2017 but couldn't persuade anyone else to run. The mayor's job was part-time and paid \$10 a month in 1969. Gabbert installed a phone in his own name in the mayor's office and paid from his own pocket for paneling in the government building.

He was 24 when he won a special election in 1967 for the remaining two years of an alderman's term. The town then had gravel streets, 2-inch water lines and no sewer system.

to those who have so lovingly cared for and checked on John Howard during these past months, especially Kathi Hester, Charlotte Cox, Buddy Staggers, Sam Gilmer, Marcia Flood, the Carlisle family, the Treloar family, and countless others. Your loving care helped us navigate through a challenging time.

Memorials in honor of Coach Patton may be given in lieu of flowers to Mississippi State University's College of Education, the MSU Department of Biological Sciences, or the Bulldog Club.

Services are under the direction of Nowell-Massey Funeral Home, 724 North Columbus Avenue, Louisville, MS. Memories and condolences may be shared with the family by signing the guest register at www.nowellmasseyfuneralhome.com.

Obituaries

WALLACE LAVERN ABLES

Wallace Lavern Ables, 77, of Durant, MS, passed away peacefully surrounded by family at Baptist Hospital in Jackson, MS on Saturday, January 2, 2021. Visitation will be held Friday, January 8, 2021 beginning at 1:00 p.m. at Seneasha Methodist Church in Goodman, MS. Military funeral service will immediately follow at 2:00 p.m. Burial is in Seneasha Cemetery in Goodman. Pallbearers are Kevin Hopper, Chad Ables, Jason Ables, Jason Ables, Jr., Jonathan Ables, Dylan Simmons and Reed McCullouch. Rev David Cain will officiate.

Wallace Lavern was married to the love of his life, Mary Louise Ables, for 50 years. He served his country in the United States Army and was a proud Vietnam Veteran. After returning home from the Army he attended and graduated from Holmes Junior College. After graduating college, he made his career as a skilled Machinist. One of his favorite sayings was, "your name always goes out before you do." Wallace Lavern was a devoted husband, father, son, grandfather, great

grandfather and friend. His unwavering love and devotion to his family was like no other. He will be greatly missed and forever remembered as being "one of the good ones."

Wallace Lavern was of Christian faith and he was a member of Seneasha Methodist Church in Goodman. He is survived by his son Kenneth L. Ables (Susan) of Kosciusko; daughters, Marsha L. Hopper (John) of Brandon and Janice L. Strahan (David) of Pearl; grandchildren, Shelley Hopper Angell of Lake, Stephanie Hopper Bishop of Forney, TX, Kevin Hopper of Brandon, Katelyn Hopper of Brandon and Amber Simmons of Kosciusko; seven great grandchildren; brother Carlos Lynn Ables of Durant; and sister Yolanda "Dollie" Curtis of San Antonio, TX;

Wallace Lavern was preceded in death by his wife of 50 years, Mary Louise Ables; brothers, Brence Ables, Charles Ables and Roy Ables; sisters, Delma Joy Tate and Vicky Farmer; father James Hanson Ables; and mother Waudine McBride Ables.



JOHN HOWARD PATTON

John Howard Patton, 65, of Starkville, passed away on Thursday, December 31, 2020, at Baptist Memorial Hospital Golden Triangle in Columbus, Mississippi. A graveside service in memory of him was held at 1:00 p.m., Tuesday, January 5th at the Durant (Mizpah) Cemetery in Durant, Mississippi. Interment of his ashes immediately followed. A celebration of life, intended for extended family and friends, former players, and fellow coaches will be held at a later date in Starkville, when it is more appropriate to do so.

John Howard was born August 25, 1955, to Dr. Coy and Sara Howard Patton. He attended Holmes Junior College, Millsaps College and was a graduate of Mississippi State University where he earned both Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Education.

He began his coaching career at St. Aloysius High School in Vicksburg, Mississippi, where he assisted with football and led baseball coaching duties, winning district coach of the year following his first season. After a year in Starkville completing his Master's, he moved to the Gulf Coast to coach at Vancleave High School, leading the Bulldogs for seven memorably competitive years. In 1987, Coach Patton returned to Starkville, securing a position with the storied legacy of coaches at Starkville High School. During his extended tenure at SHS, he helped out in a variety of ways, including a brief but enjoyable stint coaching tennis, but he was known most for his 20+ years coaching the defensive secondary for the Yellow Jacket football team, which won three state championships during that span. While proud of the personal and team accomplishments achieved throughout his career, it was the lifelong bonds

and friendships created with players and fellow coaches that he treasured the most.

"Coach" was known to be an avid Mississippi State and Starkville High sports fan. He enthusiastically attended Bulldog and Yellow Jacket sporting events year-round, and ensured that his MSU tickets were used in his absence as often as possible, so that State fans could be there to cheer on the Bulldogs. He also enjoyed collecting sports memorabilia and sharing that lifelong hobby with the younger members of his family and close friends. John Howard loved traveling with family for reunions at the beach and the mountains, savoring the memories created there and relishing the chance to feast on fresh seafood, a succulent cheeseburger, or a good ol' fashioned steak. He believed in loud music, live if possible, and took full advantage of a prized stereo system in his house that could often be heard from the street.

He was a master of telling great stories, remembering the tiniest of details about people and events to bring them to life. Nothing escaped his observations. Even if a story was retold, listeners could not help but laugh along with him at the situations regular folks got themselves into. John Howard never missed an opportunity to listen to others and always sought to find a way to compliment those he encountered. He showed tremendous respect towards his elders and was an attentive son to his parents, exemplifying how to care tenderly for our own in times of vulnerability.

John Howard Patton is survived by his son John Alden Patton and wife Tori Brooke of New Orleans, Louisiana, and two step-daughters, whom he loved as his own, Kristie Massey and husband Drew, and Kimberly Woodward, all of Louisville, Mississippi. One of his greatest joys was being "Pops" to his newest grandson, John Rawson Patton, along with grandkids, Kade, Mason, and Ansley Massey, and Holden, Kylar, Asher, and Briggs Parrish. John Howard was preceded in death by his parents and sisters, Jane Reed Patton Powell and Gina Dobbs Patton.

The family would like to express our heartfelt thanks

MLK JR. PARADE
The Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party and the Pickens Martin Luther King Jr. Parade Committee will host a county-wide MLK Convoy/Caravan on Monday, January 18 at 11 a.m. The parade line-up will be at 10:30 a.m. at Greater Fairview M.B. Church in Pickens. The route is slated to traverse through Pickens, Goodman, Durant, Lexington and Tchula.
1-7,14

ADDICTION HELP
Narconon reminds families that abuse of heroin and opioid drugs has become a national health crisis. Learn to recognize the signs of heroin abuse and get your loved one help if they are at risk. Call today for free screenings or referrals at 1-800-431-1754.
1-7,14

(USPS 247-680)
HOLMES COUNTY HERALD
Periodicals postage paid at Lexington, Mississippi by Holmes County Herald, Lexington, Mississippi.
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: Holmes County Herald, P.O. Box 60, Lexington, MS 39095. Published each Thursday at 308 Court Square, Lexington, MS 39095. Telephone 662-834-1151; Fax 662-834-1074; Email hcherald@gmail.com; Website www.holmescountyherald.com
Matthew Breazeale...Editor
Julie Ellison...Gen. Manager
SUBSCRIPTION RATES
In Holmes County - \$35.00
In Mississippi - \$40.00
Outside Mississippi - \$50.00
Senior Citizen discount - \$1.00 off above rates

WILLIAM ARON "BILLY" LEWIS JR.

William Aron "Billy" Lewis Jr., 83, died Saturday, January 2, 2021, at Merit Health-Rankin. The funeral service was held Tuesday, January 5, 2021, at 11:00 a.m., at Durant First United Methodist Church. Martin Frazure and David Cain officiated. A graveside service followed at Mizpah Cemetery in Durant, MS.

Billy was born in Coffeeville, MS on May 6, 1938, to Sally Martin and William Aron "Joe" Lewis Sr. He was a graduate of Durant High School and Holmes Junior College. He retired after 35 years of employment with Entergy.

He and his wife, Gayle, were active members of Du-

rant First United Methodist Church where he served as the Adult Sunday School teacher, member of the Methodist Men's Club, was on the pastor parrish committee, and was lay leader. He was an active and faithful member of the North Mississippi Emmaus Community, and he was involved with the Kairos Prison Ministry at Parchman.

Billy is preceded in death by his parents.

He is survived by his wife Gayle Streetman Lewis; son Kent Lewis and wife Ginger of Tupelo, MS; daughter Jeri Jo McCleskey and her husband Ray of Goodman, MS; brother Dale Lewis and wife Gladys Marie of Kosciusko, MS; and five grandchildren.