

# Obituaries

## Dr. Norman Brundage Pursley Sr.

Dr. Norman Brundage Pursley, Sr., 95, died at his home surrounded by family on June 14, 2021 after an extended illness. He was born in Griffin, Georgia on December 31, 1925.

Dr. Pursley was a loving husband to his late wife "Flo" of 70 years, a loving and patient father, and a beloved grandfather and great grandfather. In his personal life, he was a generous, gracious, and compassionate man who had many friends locally, regionally, and across the country. In his professional life, he was a visionary and a dedicated advocate. He used his many talents to champion the needs and promote the well-being of persons with disabilities and their families.

He is preceded in death by his wife, Florence Morris Pursley; daughter, Dorothy June Pursley; grandson, Lincoln Davis Cooley; parents, Frank S. Pursley and Willie Brundage Pursley Saffold; two brothers, Frank S. Pursley and Samuel C. Pursley; and sister, Marguerite Pursley. He leaves his nine children, Suzanne Pursley-Crotteau (Gary), Norman B. "Brundy" Pursley, Jr., George C. Pursley (Brigid), Catherine Cooley, Claire Pursley-Watson (Aaron), William S. Pursley (Kathleen), Louise Waters (Norman), Elaine Myers (Jack), and Alice Woods; twenty-two grandchildren; fourteen great grandchildren; three sisters-in-law, Mary Alice Lockhart, Risa Newsome, and Glenda Morris; and multiple nephews and nieces.

Dr. Pursley was a graduate of the University of Georgia (1944) and the Medical College of Georgia (1948). He began his medical career in general practice in Hiassee, Georgia (1948) and from there he began his 35-year career in institutional medicine with the State of Georgia. He first accepted a position at Central State Hospital as Senior Physician in Psychiatry (1949-1951) and then Superintendent of Gracewood and later Gracewood State School and Hospital (GSSH) (1951-1985). Upon his arrival, Gracewood only provided minimal custodial care. By the mid-1960s, Gracewood's name had been changed to Gracewood State School and Hospital. There were approximately 1900 residents with about 1200 employees that required an increase in the annual budget from 7 million to 10 million dollars. By the 1970s, there were still about 1900 residents and the number of employees had grown to approximately 5000. A full range of programs were offered in support of not only the care, but the training of the residents making GSSH the fifth largest employer in the CSRA under the direction of Dr. Pursley.

In 1999, Dr. Pursley was named the Medical College of Georgia Distinguished Alumni. His friend and colleague Dr. Donald Dunaige wrote in support of this award, "Dr. Pursley has made a difference. He has worked tirelessly to make life more pleasant and productive for the mentally retarded [persons with intellectual disability] and to offer direction to help society meet their needs. He is a person of character who feels deeply for others. As Superintendent, he was never too busy to speak to a staff member, client, or parent. He was very supportive of all the staff and worked to obtain funding to assure that GSSH clients received the best care possible."

While serving as a consultant to the President's Committee on Mental Retardation from 1966 to 1971, Dr. Pursley was involved in a movement which stimulated professionals to become more interested in the field of mental retardation [current preferred language is intellectual disability or cogni-

tive delay], encouraged the development of university affiliated MR facilities and research centers, urged educational agencies to concentrate on developing programs for intellectually disabled persons and encouraged vocational rehabilitation to develop programs specifically for the intellectually disabled. His vision and advocacy were not limited to institutions- much of his efforts resulted in increased community services including services for inclusivity of special education school-based programs, pre-vocational training, sheltered workshops, recreational programs, facility-based and community-based programs so that clients are served where they are located with age appropriate and disability specific programs. Additionally, he was a consultant and advisor on a national committee led by Eunice Kennedy Shriver in founding "Special Olympics" as a worldwide community program for the disabled.

Institutions in the 1950s provided custodial care. Dr. Pursley "opened up" GSSH inviting visitors especially parents and parent groups. This helped parents see that there were more possibilities for their children which stimulated them to form the Georgia Association for the Mentally Retarded. Additionally, the GSSH training program for medical students educated hundreds of physicians to prepare them to meet the medical needs of the disabled in the Clinical Training Program in Mental Retardation in conjunction with MCG. Along with MCG, he established The Metabolic Research Laboratory, The Chromosome Research Laboratory, and the Animal Surgical Research Laboratory at GSSH that resulted in pioneer research in the fields of metabolic diseases, chromosomal abnormalities (a precursor to the field of Genomics today), and surgical procedures.

Dr. Pursley's vitae is replete with honors and accomplishments which speak to a life of dedication to his vision and advocacy. He was an Assistant Clinical Professor of Pediatrics (1952-1979) and Clinical Professor of Psychiatry (1981-1986) at the Medical College of Georgia; a panelist at the White House Conference on Mental Retardation (1963); a member of the first President's Committee for People with Intellectual Disabilities (PCPID) [formerly - President's Committee on Mental Retardation] under the leadership of Muriel Humphreys (1966-1971); and a panel member appointed by President Kennedy to develop a "National Plan to Combat Mental Retardation." He was a Past President of the Georgia Public Health Association and the National Association of Superintendents of Public Residential Facilities for the Mentally Retarded; the Medical Building at GSSH was named the Norman B. Pursley, MD, Health Services Center; Listed in Who's Who in America; recipient for SEASMD's Richard B. Dillard Distinguished Service Award; American Association on Mental Deficiency's Distinguished Service Award; Division of Rehabilitation Services of Georgia Department of Human Resources Honors Award; National Association of Superintendents of Public Residential Facilities for the Mentally Retarded Leadership Award; Administrators Developmental Disabilities, Southern Region, Achievement of Excellence Award; Honorary Membership, Georgia Public Health Association; Foster Grandparent/Senior Companion Program Outstanding Support Award; Recognition for Great Achievement for Retarded Citizens, Their Families, and



DR. NORMAN B. PURSLEY

Friends from Augusta Association for Retarded Citizens; South Carolina Department of Mental Retardation Acknowledgement of Gratitude on Behalf of the Mentally Retarded of the State; and commissioned as a Kentucky Colonel by the governor of Kentucky for his noteworthy accomplishments and outstanding service to our community, state, and nation. At his retirement celebration, he received Resolutions of Commendation from the Georgia House of Representatives, Board of Human Resources, Governor of the State of Georgia, and Georgia Department of Human Resources. He was also recognized by Region 12 MHMRS Service Board for 50 years of service to the citizens of Georgia for his life's work at GSSH, and his consultant and volunteer work in retirement. His dedication to his fellow man also carried over into his work through the Augusta Exchange Club where Dr. Pursley served more than 60 years and was recipient of the Book of Golden Deeds Award which recognizes volunteers who dedicate countless hours of their time and talents to make our communities a better place to live.

Dr. Pursley retired to live on the lake in Lincoln County. His retirement spanned 36 years so he had the pleasure of being retired longer than he had worked even though he did continue some consulting work for Georgia Region 12 and some consulting work for Lincoln County development for Walker Norman, County Commissioner. He and his wife "Flo" were very active at Lincolnton United Methodist Church and the Lincolnton County Historical Society. Dr. Pursley was Past-President of the Historical Society. He and Flo were founders of the Lincolnton County Historical Park and Pioneers Days and are considered the absolute stalwarts of the organization. Pioneers Days has been celebrated for the past 21 years on the third Saturday in November and the tradition will continue as the Pursley family continues to man the southern cooking venues. Mostly, though, he and Flo enjoyed spending time with their children and grandchildren sharing their "lake life" of fishing, boating, and gardening along with some traveling. They spent a lot of time with grandchildren modeling for them and mentoring them as to how to be and live in the world as responsible, contributing citizens.

The family will receive friends from 5-8:00 P.M. Thursday, June 24, 2021 at Platt's Funeral Home Belair Road.

A Celebration of Dr. Pursley's life and service will take place at 11:00 a.m. Friday, June 25, 2021 Trinity-on-the-Hill United Methodist Church in Augusta with Rev. Deborah Griffith officiating and Dr. Randy Kanipe assisting. The Augusta Exchange Club will serve as honorary pallbearers. There will be a reception immediately following the service in Wesley Hall.

A private interment of the ashes will take place at Clinton United Methodist Church Cemetery near Gray where Dr. Pursley will be laid to rest alongside his beloved wife and daughter.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be directed to the J. Harold Harrison, MD Fellows Fund, 720 St. Sebastian Way, Ste. 150, Augusta, Georgia 30901; Lincolnton United Methodist Church, P.O. Box 85, Lincolnton, Georgia 3081; or to the Lincolnton County Historical Society, P.O. Box 869, Lincolnton, Georgia 30817.

Please sign the guestbook and send condolences to [www.plattsfuneralhome.com](http://www.plattsfuneralhome.com). Platt's Funeral Home, 337 North Belair Rd, Evans, GA 30809

## Across The Savannah Hemp and Kudzu, a Good Summer Combo

By TOM POLAND  
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It was like stepping back into the 1960s, sitting in that cool, refreshing gazebo up North Carolina way. Its vines and emerald green leaves, translucent and bright, revived memories of my Granddad Walker's front porch. Back in the fifties and sixties he didn't have air conditioning, not even a window unit, but he had something pretty cool, literally and figuratively—a dense screen of kudzu growing and weaving throughout a lattice of hemp rope.

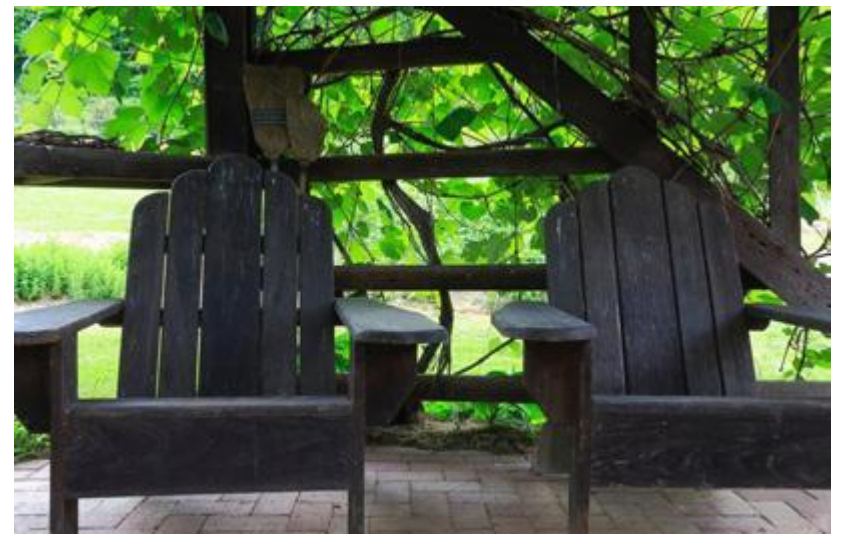
Of the many memories of that homeplace long burnt to the ground, Granddad's summer porch stands above all. Each spring he'd string hemp rope in crisscrossing patterns across eight columns and plant cuttings of kudzu at the porch's base. Kudzu propagates easily and each cutting would grow 10 to 25 feet by summer time when the living is supposedly easy. He grew a green haven from the western sun that blasted his front porch. You could step behind that green screen and the temperature plummeted.

Now we change filters and pay techs to keep air conditioning units in good shape. AC is nice but it comes with a price. It eats electricity and it killed off quaint customs. Until I saw that North Carolina gazebo, I had not seen a leafy green screen in close to sixty years.

And what about hemp? Mention hemp to some folks and it brings to mind weed, reefer, cannabis, marijuana or "marry-j-wanna" as some refer to it. So here we have two bad boy plants in need of some good publicity. Well, there was a time they teamed up to do something good: bring cool relief to feverish summers down South, but those days are gone with the wind.

Before AC arrived full force we made do. We'd sit beneath a shade tree where a breeze felt wonderful. In church we used funeral home fans. How well I recall those hot summer days when window fans and attic fans cooled us. My Grandmom Poland kept a glass jar of water in the fridge. An old orange juice jar it was. The water was as cold as if it had seeped from a glacier.

I improvised. On a blistering summer day spent picking plums, biking, exploring woods, and climbing trees, I'd go to my parents' back



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porch, open the freezer locker, and lean into it as far as I could. For the briefest of moments I escaped to Antarctica. Pure cold air coming off snow-white frost chilled me in a flash and back out into the heat I went.

These days summers seem as hot as the hinges of Hell. I suppose aging makes it tougher to tolerate the heat, though the humidity is what's so onerous down here. It wilts outsiders, a good thing. More than anything though, the omnipresence of air conditioning ruined us. From home to car to restaurant, the thermostat gets a lot of attention, and tolerating heat isn't easy. We're

just not used to it anymore. As for green screens of kudzu, I don't see them anymore but that gazebo comes close. These days about as close to an environmental positive way of cooling we get are continuous ridge vents and wind-operated attic turbines.

A cold glass of ice tea works too. How I'd love to sip tea one more time behind Granddad's green screen of kudzu, the plant that ate the South.

P.S. As I write I hear the heat pump working away ... pumping away heat nobody needs right now. It'll be a different story come winter.

## Leroy earns Faculty Honors for spring term at Ga. Tech

William Leroy of Lincolnton, GA, earned the distinction of Faculty Honors for Spring 2021 at the Georgia Institute of Technology. This designation is awarded to undergraduate students who have earned a 4.0 academic average for the semester.

The Georgia Institute of Technology, or Georgia Tech, is a top 10 public research university developing leaders who advance technology and improve the human condition.

The Institute offers business, computing, design, engineering, liberal arts, and sciences degrees. Its nearly 40,000 students, representing 50 states and 149 coun-

tries, study at the main campus in Atlanta, at campuses in France and China, and through distance and online learning.

As a leading technological university, Georgia Tech is an engine of economic development for Georgia, the Southeast, and the nation, conducting more than \$1 billion in research annually for government, industry, and society.

### Mail in tithes

Price Grove Baptist Church members are reminded that they are able to mail in their tithes to Price Grove Baptist Church, P.O. Box 916, Lincolnton, GA 30817.



### LCPF mobile distribution slated for July 1

The Lincolnton County Food Pantry will hold a mobile food distribution on Thursday, July 1, at 1066 Firetower Road from 10 a.m. - noon. Volunteers (l-r) Travis Reid, Abigail Enelow (newest volunteer); Emily Enelow, Johnny Carr, Jenny Carr, Tim Easler, Evelyn Norman, Jayda Mays, Lula Crite (not pictured) Paula Drew, Margaret Hearst, Ella Norman and Naomi Cobb gather in a prayer circle after preparations for the June 17, distribution.

Mobile food distributions are also schedule for July 17 and July 29.



### FSB presents check to LCHS musical theatre

Farmers State Bank President Bruce Turner (right) recently presented a donation to Randy Smith, musical theatre director for the LCHS Musical Theatre production of Seussical.

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