

Henry Durham, 94

Henry Durham, 94, passed away on January 23, 2026 in Highlands, NC, surrounded by loved ones. He was preceded in death by his wife of nearly 60 years, Jo Carol Law Durham. He will be lovingly remembered by his daughter, Martha Law Durham Schweitz, son John Thomas Durham, daughter-in-law Cathi Durham and his five beloved grandchildren, Carolyn Augusta Schweitz, Elizabeth Julianna Schweitz, Diana Kathryn Schweitz, William Henry Durham and Nathaniel Law Durham. He was also preceded in death by his brother James "Jim" Leslie Durham and sister Martha Durham Schoening. Other family include the father of his granddaughters Eric Schweitz, sister-in-law Henrietta Hill Durham, nephew Robert Hill Durham (Eva), nieces Brenda Lee Bushey (Martin) and Elizabeth Ruth Horde (Rocky), great nephews, Hunter (Kate), Rory, and Jared Horde, Jeb Bushey, and Jimmy (Yareli) and Robbie (Kate) Durham, and countless others who will greatly miss his generous and accepting presence.



Henry Durham

Law, the lovely and vivacious daughter of his mother's best friend. Although he and Jo went to separate colleges and started their young lives apart, she remained a steadfast part of his life until they finally made their relationship official in 1964.

Henry went to high school at the Kentucky Military Institute (1945-1949) and often attributed his discipline to the years he spent in military school. He went to college at the University of Kentucky (1949-1953) in Lexington, KY, where he received a BS degree in Commerce/Business. Henry was awarded the Alma Magna Mater award in 1953 for the outstanding senior of his class. In 1950, he pledged the Lambda Lambda chapter of Sigma Chi fraternity. As a member of Sigma Chi, Henry served as pro-consul of the LL Chapter and was president of the Interfraternity Council. After graduating, he served as General Fraternity Assistant Executive Secretary for Sigma Chi in Evanston, IL for 1.5 years before joining the Army.

Henry then served in the United States Army from 1954-1956. As a UK ROTC graduate, he entered the army as a 2nd Lieutenant in the Third Army Combat Infantry. After officers training, he was promoted to 1st Lt. and served at Fort Knox in the Legal Section, which furthered his interest in pursuing law as a profession. After his honorable discharge from the Army, Henry attended law school at George Washington in Wash-

ington, DC. During school, he held part time employment with the Administrative Office of the Courts, as Deputy Clerk in the US House of Representatives, and as a law clerk for Harrington and Graham.

Upon obtaining his law degree, Henry held several positions in Washington, DC before returning to Lexington as the first staff legal counsel at UK. After working for the university for three years, Henry entered private practice with Gess Mattingly where he practiced until 1969. During his time at Gess Mattingly, he represented several clients in the thoroughbred breeding industry. Eventually he was asked to go to Washington D.C. to establish the American Horse Council where he served as Executive VP from 1969 to 1973.

During this time, Henry and Jo Carol started their married life together. On Valentine's Day of 1964 Henry popped the question while on a ski trip in Gatlinburg, TN. The two were married in their favorite place, the mountains of Western NC on May 30th, 1964. They started their 60-year marriage living in the "Servants Cottage" on the Keeneland property in Lexington, KY. Shortly after their marriage they welcomed their biggest blessings, Martha and Thomas in 1965 and 1967 respectively. Henry continued to pursue his professional endeavors while balancing the new chapter of fatherhood.

After DC, he returned with his young family back to his hometown, Greensburg, KY to open his own law practice. Giving back to the place that raised him was highly important to Henry. He served on the Greensburg Deposit Bank Board of Governors and was involved in the Greensburg Historical Society. Through his many connections, he helped save the old train depot from demolition. It still stands today as a community event space and a piece of history. Through

connections from his time in Lexington, he helped pioneer the Kentucky Education TV Endowment. As he had done throughout his life, in all the places he lived, he helped his hometown continue to flourish.

To add to these accomplishments, Henry also served as one of the founding members and first Chairman of the Central Kentucky Council for International Living, a community effort to welcome and arrange home stays for international visitors participating in educational travel programs. In this role, he organized trips and traveled to Denmark and India. Henry's love of elephants was drawn from his time in India. Throughout their lives, Henry and Jo traveled extensively and hosted several young people from all over the world, many with whom they remained close, especially the family's dear friend, Stella Dennis.

After Henry retired in 1988 from his private practice in Greensburg, he and Jo moved to Jo's family farm in Highlands, NC and split their time between the Western NC mountains and Brooksville, FL in Jo's childhood home. Friends and neighbors in both Highlands and Brooksville enjoyed whenever the Durhams were at home. The folks who visited often recalled leaving with a belly full of Jo's good food and an earful of Henry's sage advice.

In 1990, Henry received an invitation to an interest meeting about starting a Sigma Chi chapter at Western Carolina University in Cullowhee, NC. Henry and Jo were the only ones to show up, but he was all that was needed. Soon thereafter, the Kappa Gamma Chapter of Sigma Chi was founded. Brother Mark Ellison put it best:

"Often in life we don't grasp the significance of what is happening in the moment. So it was on September 9, 1990 as the brothers of the Sigma Chi Alpha petitioning group at Western Carolina gathered at the West-

ern Sizzlin in Sylva. We had sent a letter out to Sigma Chi alumni in the area inviting them to join us for dinner in hopes that we could have their help in our goal to become a Sigma Chi chapter. One Sigma Chi joined us that evening. Henry Durham and his wife Jo from Highlands. During that meeting, and after in a letter, he committed to helping us in establishing a firm and lasting foundation for our chapter.

He did just that. We obtained a charter in 1991 due to his guidance and support. He helped us in obtaining land which the chapter now owns. He helped us build an alumni network. And on and on.. for decades.

But it went way beyond that. He became a mentor, friend and father figure to countless Sigma Chis at Western, me included. He hired many of the undergrads to work on his family's Cheney Lane Tree Farm.

He and Jo welcomed us all like family. He saw in each of us potential we might not have seen in ourselves, and encouraged us to strive to be our very best.

So on that September day in 1990 I did not realize I was meeting someone who would become one of my very best friends, a mentor, someone whom I would turn to often for guidance. That was not something I envisioned happening when I went to college. But it did."

Much of the latter part of Henry's life was dedicated to Sigma Chi. In 2008, Henry was awarded Significant Sig, the highest honor Sigma Chi Fraternity bestows on its members, given in recognition for professional and personal achievement. Henry was a member of the Sigma Chi Foundation Board of Governors for 15 years and served on numerous committees. In addition to being named Significant Sig, he was named Order of the Constantine Sig, a member of Sigma Chi's 150th Hall of Fame, and bestowed the honor of Governor Emeritus in 2009.

Despite the multi-

tude of personal and professional achievements, his proudest title was "Gran Henry" or "Pop-Pop". He was immensely proud of his children and grandchildren. He loved summers with his grandchildren and cousin Sam Baskir. He was famous for saying "What's better than Christmas? Cousins!" At the family table, he passed on the importance of family, traditions and an open-to-all table policy, often ending meals with a large scoop of vanilla ice cream and the "best part of the day" round table discussion. Gran Henry and Mama Jo were known to host lovely lunches out on the deck filled with generosity, story telling, and a never-ending pitcher of sweet tea. Watching all five grandchildren graduate high school, start college and/or careers gave him great satisfaction throughout the ending years of his life. His love for his family was never conditional, but a constant, warm light that radiated acceptance, support, and a progressive mindset. From small details like teaching the kids how to properly twirl spaghetti on a spoon to larger life lessons of "never back up when you can go forward," anyone who had the pleasure of meeting Henry walked away with a piece of wisdom not soon forgotten. His memory will always be a blessing.

In lieu of flowers, please consider donating to Henry and Jo's Western Carolina University's Sigma Chi Scholarship fund.

<https://donate.sigmachi.org/give/763927/#/!donation/checkout>

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FAITH CAN MOVE MOUNTAINS

A Valentine for Everyone
"Do everything in love."
1 Corinthians 16:14 NIV

When I was in grammar school it was common practice for the kids to give a valentine to everyone in their class. Our parents would buy packages of Valentine cards that had a bunch of small Valentines with preprinted messages such as "Be My Valentine" or "Won't you be my Valentine?" on them and then the kids would fill in the names in the spaces for "To:" and "From:" and hand them out to their classmates on Valentines Day. And what a beautiful way to teach kids that they should be kind and loving to everyone. No one was left out and everyone went home with a pile of Valentines. And of course, if there was someone special in your class who you had a crush on you could write an extra note to him or her. Maybe we should do something similar this year on Valentine's Day. There are a million ways you can show others that you love them, from a nice personal note to something you baked or made yourself. The only limit is your imagination and the love you have for those around you.
-Christopher Simon

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THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD I SHALL NOT WANT
PSALM 23:1

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Lord, Hear Our Prayer

Lord, Hear Our Prayer

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever. Psalm 107:1