

Benson Leeroy Skelton, Sr.

After a long and wonderful life, Benson Leeroy Skelton, Sr. died peacefully in his sleep on August 20, 2010. He was 105. He is survived by his son and daughter-in-law, Benson Skelton, Jr. and Betty Ann; his brother Jack Skelton (Miriam); his granddaughters, Susan Skelton, Hollie Sanders (Guy), and Sarah Rich (Jeff); his great-grandchildren Lindsey Sanders, John Benson Rich, and John Munroe Rich, and a host of family and friends. He was preceded in death by his wife, Louise Kellett Skelton; his parents, John Loyall and Linnie Owens Skelton; his sisters, Cassie Dollar, and Mildred Grant, and brother John Skelton. He was an active member of Trinity United Methodist Church.

Benson Skelton was born in Atlanta on November 26, 1904, attended Georgia Tech, and began his early career working for the American Bakeries Company in Atlanta and Birmingham. He was promoted to plant manager of the Merita Bread Company in Orlando and later to bakery manager for Flowers Bakeries in Tallahassee. In his later career, he was President of the Southern Bakers Association in Atlanta. He was a life member of the American Society of Bakery Engineers, and of the American Society of Association Executives. Each year, the Georgia Society of Association Executives bestows an award named in his honor.

Mr. Skelton was a very active citizen wherever he lived, including over 70 years in Tallahassee. He was a founding member of the Board of Directors of the Tallahassee Memorial Hospital, a life member and past president of the Tallahassee Chamber of Commerce, past president of the Tallahassee Rotary Club, a founding member of the Tallahassee Jaycees, and served as a director or officer in numerous organizations including the International Christian Leadership Club, The Tallahassee Senior Center Advisory Board, the Lake Ella Retirement Center, and the Old-Timers Club. He was a member of the Jackson Lodge, a 32nd degree Mason, a Shriner, and an Elk. He was recognized as the Tallahassee Democrat Senior Citizen of the Year, the Jaycee Senior Citizen of the Year, the Woodgate Neighborhood Association Neighbor of the Year, and was a finalist for the Leadership Tallahassee Lifetime Leadership Award.

Benson always had a kind word, and was known for passing out long-stemmed red roses to anyone who needed a little lift. He was instrumental in getting the Leon High School Field concrete stands installed, and worked tirelessly with local officials to get streetlights, turn lanes, and sidewalks for the community. He was President of the Leon County Welfare Association (forerunner to the United Way of the Big Bend) and served twice as chair of the annual fundraising drive. He was a director of the local Red Cross chapter. He loved life, and right until the end he was reminding us all to, "Be sweet, and smile!"

Our family would like to offer special thanks to all of the loving caregivers from The Meadows, St. Augustine Plantation, and Consulate Health Care who have provided us assistance and guidance over the years. You are God's special angels! In lieu of flowers, we ask that memorial contributions be made to Trinity United Methodist Church, the Tallahassee Senior Center, or a charity of your choice.