



Mr. Cliff Alexander

November 5, 1938 - February 25, 2024

Henry Clifford (“Cliff”) Alexander, Jr. passed peacefully on February 25, 2024 with all his children by his side in Guntersville, Alabama. Born November 5, 1938 in Mobile, Alabama to Henry Clifford Alexander of Mobile and Julia Pollard McMillan, whose family came from Stockton, he was the fifth generation of Alexanders to live in Mobile since the first Henry Alexander came from France in the early 1800’s. Descended from Revolutionary War General Andrew Pickens, Alabama’s fourth Governor John Murphy, and David Rounsavall, signer of the Cumberland Compact, Cliff reflected on his lineage and remarked that both he and his ancestors most wanted to relocate to the wild frontier far from civilization. Wanderlust certainly marked his life.

After graduating from Springhill College in 1960, he earned a master’s degree in physics at the University of Notre Dame and was awarded his doctorate from the University of Alabama. He taught and worked at Auburn University, the University of Alabama and the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. He retired from the National Guard in 1989 with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. He later worked at Eglin Air Force Base and the Pentagon before retiring in 2006. He always used to say that if you chose to do what you enjoy, your work was your reward.

Predeceased by parents and brother Benjamin McMillan, He is survived by his wife of 59 years, the former Mary Ellen Hakanson of Mobile, son Matthew

Clifford (Anthony) of Peekskill and Wappingers Falls, New York, daughter Pixie Ann of Washington D.C., and sons Mark Henry and Benjamin McMillan (Alicia) of Grant, Alabama, grandchildren, Joseph, Dylan, Lillie, Rylan and Amaleah, as well as sisters, Judy Cody and Ella Smith of Mobile, Connie Werner of Ozark, and Ginny Alexander of Fairhope.

Cliff was a contrarian academic, a rugged individualist and a faithful Catholic. He pursued Judo, in which he earned a black belt, as well as marksmanship, tennis, ham radio and photography for all of which he was awarded many trophies and awards. Through tennis, his favorite hobby, he met lifelong friend, Warren O'Rourke, whose father played Cliff's in Crawford Park. Seventy-five years later, he taught grandchildren, Dylan and Lillie, to hold the racquet. He loved camping in the Blue Ridge and Smoky Mountains, the state forests of Alabama and the Appalachian trail in the Hudson Valley. On his last great adventure, in 2015, he took his wife and grandson Joseph to the Rocky Mountains to a 19th century mountain man re-enactment using only period gear. He was known to entertain himself with a large book of advanced math theory problems and a glass of rum. He loved astronomy which he also taught. And he really enjoyed listening to jazz, blues and swing. While playing records from his extensive album collection, he would stop his children and excitedly switch from song to song sharing his love of Duke Ellington, Julie London, Billie Holiday and many others. Once Cliff discovered a passion, he was not content to enjoy only its most popular forms; he craved to experience its most obscure examples becoming thoroughly knowledgeable about them. Although, his children did not choose to follow any of his interests, they each inherited his passion for delving deep into their own.

Cliff dearly loved Mary Ellen with whom he lived his last years back in Mobile, Alabama after 48 years in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, Morristown, Tennessee, Marion, Alabama, West Point, New York and Shalimar, Florida. They showed great affection for each other and spent days praying the Liturgy of the Hours

together. After all those years, with great sadness his children removed Cliff and Mary Ellen from Mobile to live in separate nursing homes near sons, Ben and Mark in Guntersville, Alabama. The family is extremely grateful for the compassionate care he received at Marshall Manor Nursing Home until his passing.

Three blocks away from his childhood home in Mobile on North Monterey, a mass will be held in his memory at St. Mary's Church on Old Shell Road where Cliff attended both as a parishioner and as a student.