

A Celebration of Life



ALPHONSO
Benjamin Varner

December 21, 1928 - October 30, 2022

November 4, 2022

11:00 AM

Saint Peter AME Church

502 State University Drive • Fort Valley, GA

Alphonso Benjamin Varner, affectionately called “Hubba Hubba” was born December 21, 1928 in West Palm Beach, FL to the parentage of Voley Williams and Estella D. Varner. He had four sisters and one brother who have preceded him in death. His early childhood church was Payne Chapel A.M.E. Church, West Palm Beach, FL.

Upon graduating from Industrial High School, West Palm Beach, FL, he continued to further his education by earning his B.S. and Master Ed. degrees from Florida A&M University, Tallahassee, FL, where he played football and later coached. His mentor was the legendary Coach Jake Gaither. His football accomplishments include: Two-time All American Tackle 1950 and 1951 at FAMU and All Alaska Tackle in 1953.

He became Head Football Coach of Edward Waters College in Jacksonville, FL., and later moved to Fort Valley where he was named the first Instructor of Military Science & Tactics at Fort Valley State College (now University), and was also an Assistant Professor of Military Science. At this fine institution he would later become an Assistant Professor of Health and Physical Education and Defensive Coordinator for FVSC Wildcats, known as “**Blue Death**” Defense. Under his tutelage and which he took pride in, many of his football players achieved successful accomplishments in professions, to include professional football.

While working at Fort Valley State, he continued his African Methodist Episcopal roots and joined Saint Peter A.M.E. Church in 1958, where he served in many capacities. The current pastor of Saint Peter A.M.E. Church is the Reverend A. Angelo Dixon. He was a Trustee (Emeritus), and also served on the Sons of Allen Ministry, Lay Organization, and was the Coordinator of Meals on Wheels. He was voted as the Sixth Episcopal District’s Layperson of the Year in 2006, which was a high point in his Christian life. In 2018, he was inducted into the Sons of Allen Ministry Hall of Fame. One of his favorite verses is Micah 6:8 which reads, “*He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.*”

Brother Varner was an active member of Fred Douglas Lodge #143 F & AM., PHA for over 50 years, and was honored by the Lodge for that accomplishment on April 1, 2017 with an elegant recognition/celebration banquet at Fort Valley State University Pettigrew Center. Brother Varner received his 50 year pin for 50 continuous years of membership with the Lodge, along with a Life Membership plaque. The Lodge also established a scholarship in his name at The Fort Valley State University. He served as Assistant Secretary for over 20 years. Brother Varner participated in many of the Masonic Lodge's community outreach programs, such as issuing fruit baskets and Christmas cards to residents of Fort Valley Health Care Center and Virginia Gardens Assisted Living Center on Christmas Day. In 2018 he received a Certificate of Appreciation from Peach County Retired Educators and in 2019, he also received an Emeritus Plaque from Georgia Retired Educators Association.

In 1988, Coach Varner retired from FVSU. He was also a retired Lieutenant Colonel of the U.S. Army. In 1983, he was inducted into Florida A & M Sports Hall of Fame; and in 1997 the Wall of Fame. That same year, Coach received an FVSU Distinguish Service Award. In 1998 Coach was inducted into the Southern Intercollegiate Athletics Conference (SIAC) Hall of Fame and FVSU Hall of Fame in 2010. He was a life member of the American Football Coaches Association (AFCA), and was also a proud member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity. He was initiated into the Alpha Xi Chapter of the Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity at Florida A&M University in 1952. Among other endeavors, he found time to remain active with various ministries of his church, the Peach County Retired Educators Association, and the Fred Douglas Lodge #143 F & AM., Prince Hall Affiliated.

He was married to the late Juanita Edwards Varner, and had three daughters who are deceased: Denise V. Jackson, Gina Varner, Wanda Chambers and one granddaughter, Tracie McNabb, who also preceded him in death.

He leaves to cherish his memory, his loving wife, Mrs. Maggie L. Varner, their daughters: Desiree V. O'Bryant (Samuel), and Brenda Henley; five grandchildren: Thaddeus (Lisa) Jackson, Lagwana Brown, Lelita (Antonio) Fuller, Jerrell Howard, Frances O'Bryant; ten great grandchildren and a host of loving and caring nieces, nephews, in-laws and friends.



Living for Others

Charles E. Orr

Someone is trudging, weary and worn,
Along life's rugged way;
Strength is fast failing, hope almost gone,
Feet are going astray.

Speak a kind word, his lone heart to cheer
Wipe from his eye the sorrowing tear;
Drive from his life the gloom and despair;
Lend him a hand today.

The winds are blowing wildly and chill,
Filling some heart with fear;
Someone is toiling long up the steep hill
Under a load of care.

Someone's tossing on life's ocean wave,
No one to pity, no one to care;
Rush, my brother, with heart true and brave,
Help his burdens to bear.

Be up and doing while it is day,
Soon the long night will come;
Your life is fleeing swiftly away,
Soon 'twill be past and gone.

Do what you can to help those in need,
Be a blessing by word and by deed;
Let "Living for Others" be ever your creed;
Heaven will give you a crown.



Order of Celebration

Officiant, Rev. Angelo Dixon

Processional

Words of Comfort.....Reverend A. Angelo Dixon
Pastor, Saint Peter AME Church

Selection.....Greater Allen Chapel Choir
Macon, Georgia

Prayer.....Sister Frances C. O'Bryant

Scriptures

Old Testament.....Reverend Michael G. Ephraim
Former Pastor, Saint Peter AME Church

New Testament.....Reverend Dr. Gregory Homer
Retired AME Pastor

Solo.....Presiding Elder Bertram C. Smith
*Macon North District
Former Pastor, Saint Peter AME Church*

Reflections

(Three minutes or less please)

As an Uncle.....Dr. Laurita M. Burley

As a Church Member.....Brother James A. Latimore

As a Coach.....Sanford B. Hillsman

Selection.....Greater Allen Chapel Choir
Macon, Georgia

Eulogy.....Reverend Mark S. Pierson
Former Pastor, Saint Peter AME Church

Acknowledgements.....Edwards Small Mortuary Staff

Recessional

Interment

Willow Lake Memorial Gardens
1578 Willow Lake Road
Fort Valley, GA

Repast

Saint Peter AME Church
502 State University Drive
Fort Valley, GA

Our Lives We Dedicate

ALMA MATER

Fort Valley State, Fort Valley State!

Our lives to thee we dedicate.

Our souls we blend to sing thy name

Eternal praise, we do proclaim

Faithful and true, Fort Valley State,

We at thy call, forever wait.

We lift our hearts in thankfulness

For loyalty and Thoroughness

-William H. Pipes

We love to hear thy sweet name called

Thou art the dearest school of all

Our hearts to thee will e're belong

Thou art so steadfast, brave and strong

We love thee so, Fort Valley State!

Our loyalty we dedicate,

Thy name forever we proclaim

Fort Valley State we love thy name.

-Odessa Hardison McNair '54





Alphonso "Big Ben" B. Varner
Inducted in 1983
Football - 1948-1952

Pallbearers

William Burley Jr.

Lewis Jackson Jr.

Thaddeus Jackson

Billy Turner

Jerrell Howard

Reginald Varner

Flower Bearers

Friends & Family

Acknowledgements

A friendly smile, a casual touch, these are things that mean so much. Thank you for being with us in our time of sorrow and sharing in our prayers today and tomorrow. God gives us comfort in the form of family and friends. May his peace be with you and may his love never end.

Professional Services Entrusted to

Edwards Small Mortuary



"Committed to Excellence"

1011 Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive

Fort Valley, GA 31030

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