

Houston Taylor Rankin, age 89, died on August 11, 2023 in Abilene. Inurnment of his remains will be in the Texas State Veterans Cemetery. A memorial service will be held at Logsdon Chapel on the campus of Hardin-Simmons University at 2:00 p.m. on Friday, the 18th of August. Visitation will follow in the reception room at Logsdon Chapel.

Taylor was born the fifth of six children to Sam Hull and Chlorice Bible Rankin in Jefferson City, Tennessee on June 30, 1934. Taylor's childhood memories were heavily influenced by the activities of WWII. He remembered the sacrificing, rationing, recycling, and heavy farm work with his elderly father because his older brother was serving in the US Navy.

Taylor finished high school, completed his undergraduate degree in college, was married, served three years in the US Army, and had his first child during the decade of the 1950s. Libby and Taylor met while students at Carson-Newman College. They were married on June 15, 1957 at the First Baptist Church in Morristown, Tennessee. During their marriage, they lived in Bristol and Knoxville, Tennessee, Tuskegee and Auburn, Alabama, and El Paso, Corpus Christi, and Abilene, Texas.

After serving in the military, Taylor earned a MS degree in Botany at the University of Tennessee in 1961. Taylor taught in the public schools in Knoxville and then as a college professor at the University of Corpus Christi. In 1966, Taylor returned to graduate school at Auburn University where he received a Ph.D. in Botany in 1969.

Taylor moved his family back to Texas in 1969 where he served 34 years as Professor of Biology (27 years as Department Head) at Hardin-Simmons University. Although trained as a botanist, he gained great satisfaction serving as advisor to students interested in attending medical school, dental school, and other health-related fields. Taylor served two terms as Vice President and two years as President of the Hardin-Simmons faculty. He was named Senior Professor of Biology in 1995 and received the Outstanding Faculty Member Award. In 2000, Taylor was recognized for outstanding service by the Holland School of Sciences and Mathematics. The university's greenhouse bears his name.

Taylor enjoyed playing the mountain dulcimer with the Catclaw Creek Band and the Big Country Autoharp and Dulcimer Club. Taylor was ordained as a deacon in the University Baptist Church, Abilene, and served as deacon in the First Baptist Church beginning in 1972. Tennis was an enjoyable pastime, especially during his retirement years.

Taylor was preceded in death by his parents and his sisters Phyllis, Ruth, and Frances and a brother, Lyle. His brother Richard Rankin and wife Sue live in White Pine, Tennessee. Taylor is survived by his loving wife, Elizabeth Jaynes Rankin; one daughter, Rachael Rankin Bein and husband Bob of Abilene; and two sons, Rob Rankin and wife Julie of Midland and Andrew Rankin and wife Laurie of Owasso, Oklahoma. His eight grandchildren are Taylor, Chase, Karl, Callie, Jonathan, Justin, Erich, and Jacob. His three great-grandchildren are Greyson and Stellan Revell and Ida Rankin.

Memorial gifts may be made to The Rankin Family Scholarship fund at Hardin-Simmons University or to the charity of your choice.



Scan this code to view the memorial video

A Celebration of the Life of



H. Taylor Rankin

June 30, 1934 – August 11, 2023

2:00 PM Friday, August 18, 2023

Logsdon Chapel

Hardin-Simmons University

I'll Fly Away

Some glad morning when this life is over,
I'll fly away;
To a home on God's celestial shore,
I'll fly away (I'll fly away).

Chorus

I'll fly away, Oh Glory
I'll fly away; (in the morning)
When I die, Hallelujah, by and by,
I'll fly away (I'll fly away).

Just a few more weary days and then,
I'll fly away;
To a land where joy shall never end,
I'll fly away (I'll fly away)

Chorus

I'll fly away, Oh Glory
I'll fly away; (in the morning)
When I die, Hallelujah, by and by,
I'll fly away (I'll fly away).

Yes, when I die, Hallelujah, by and by,
I'll fly away (I'll fly away).

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A Celebration of the Life of H. Taylor Rankin

Prelude Nancy Jones

Welcome and Prayer Rev. Mike Greenfield

How Great Thou Art (#323) Congregation

Remembrances Dr. Christopher McNair

In the Sweet By and By

Sweet Beulah Land

Oh, How I Love Jesus (#601) Catclaw Creek

Message and Prayer Pastor Mike Harkrider

Psalm 150 Jim Jones

I'll Fly Away Catclaw Creek and Congregation

Postlude Nancy Jones