



Chaplain LTC Delton Collins, US Army (Ret.)

January 15, 1930 - November 21, 2017

Chaplain LTC Delton Collins, US Army (Ret.), 87, died Tuesday, Nov. 21, 2017, at The Green House at Calvary in Columbus, Ga. A funeral service will be held at 2 p.m. on Monday, Nov. 27, 2017, at Banks Funeral Home in Sylvester, Ga., with interment to follow in the Hillcrest Cemetery. The family will receive friends from 1 p.m. until the service hour at Banks Funeral Home. Dr. Don Wilhite and Army Chaplain Wyne Hutchings will officiate. Delton was born Jan. 15, 1930, in Ashburn, Ga., and was a proud member of the Rakkasans, Company E, 187th Airborne Infantry Regiment. He was severely wounded in action during the March 23, 1951, Munsan-ni combat jump and would eventually document that experience in his 2004 autobiography, "Nights and Days of Hell." His book went through several printings, and he took great joy in the hundreds of letters he received from Korean War veterans across the country, who thanked him for finally telling their story.

Delton was honored with a Korean Service Medal with the Silver Service Star and two Bronze Service Stars; the Vietnam Service Medal with four Bronze Service Stars; the Purple Heart; Parachutist-Glider Badge with Bronze Star; Meritorious Service Medal, and many other commendations.

In 1952, he married his sweetheart, Nellie Wildolph Lewis, and theirs was a relationship full of love and laughter for almost 64 years, until her death in 2016.

After the Korean War, he graduated from Mercer University and then received his Master of Divinity degree from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. He rejoined the Army as a Chaplain and volunteered to serve in the Vietnam War.

Returning from Vietnam, Delton received his Master's in Marriage and Family Therapy from Long Island University and became a practicing member of the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy. He served as a Chaplain and therapist until his retirement from the Army in 1981.

But his heart was never far from the Army. He soon went back to work as a counselor at Fort Benning's Kelley Hill Education Center, devoting himself to helping soldiers further their education.

Delton was a loving father to his three girls, Debbie, Julie and Jenn, and he never stopped cheering on their careers and education. His practical jokes were the stuff of infamy, and

he taught them how to live every day to the fullest and to maintain grace under pressure. After his second retirement in 1994, Delton and Nellie travelled the United States in their camper and flew to their favorite place, Honolulu, Hawai'i, almost every year until 2006. At the age of 76, he capped their last visit to the island with a parasailing adventure, wanting to soar under a parachute one more time "before he got old" — a fitting symbol of his outlook on life.

Survivors include his daughters, Debbie Pate (Daryl) of Lake Park, Ga., Julie Collins of Columbus, Ga., and Jenn Collins (Brad Barnes) of Columbus, Ga.; brothers, Oran Collins of Mt. Juliet, Tenn. and Almon Collins of St. Stephen, S.C.; sister, Annise Harwell of Covington, La.; grandchildren, John Pate (Alicia), Jason Pate (Misty) and Elizabeth Pate; 4 great grandchildren, and many beloved nieces and nephews.

Delton was preceded in death by his wife, Nellie; son, Delton Michael; parents, Dorsey and Rosa Collins; sisters, Zelma Ellerbee and Edith Hardage; and brothers, Dorsey Maloy Collins and Marvin Kenneth Collins.

In lieu of flowers, please make a donation in his memory to The Green House at Calvary (7490 Old Moon Road, Columbus, Ga., 31909) or to the Wounded Warrior Project.