

# Watershed expert, community leader Gene Cornelison dies

BY CAROLYN MATHEWS

carolynmathews@ledgernews.com

The Rev. Gene Cornelison, an active citizen and watershed expert in Cherokee County, died March 30, 2010, at Northside Hospital Cherokee, following a sudden illness. He was 75.

Cornelison, pastor of Pilgrim Baptist Church, in the Clayton community, was, at the time of his death, secretary of the board of directors for the Cherokee County Water and Sewerage Authority (CCWSA). He also currently was serving as chairman of Amicalola Electric Membership Corporation (AEMC) Operation Round-Up, chairman of the board of North Georgia Community Action, a board member of the Upper Etowah River Alliance, and a Clayton Community Fire Department volunteer.

Cornelison was retired from AEMC, where he had worked for 28 years. He was a past president and member of the board of directors of the Cherokee Chamber of Commerce, a past chairman of the board of Limestone Valley, and a former Cherokee High School vocational electrical teacher.

Diane Minick, director of the Upper Etowah River Alliance, said Cornelison was a member of the board since its formation in 1996.

"He was an invaluable asset; we relied on his wealth of knowl-

edge," Minick said. "He loved the land and the water and wanted to do the right thing to protect it."

Minick said Cornelison will be remembered for his sense of humor and his good citizenship.

"He was an honest person with morals and values; that's the way he lived his life," she said.

Tom Heard, director of the CCWSA, said Cornelison, who had served on the authority for more than 16 years, was instrumental in the CCWSA's completion of the Hollis Lathem Reservoir, as well as the water authority's present water treatment and wastewater treatment plants.

"Gene was one of those rare individuals with the foresight to see what was possible for Cherokee," Cornelison Heard said. "He always viewed the authority as serving our customers first, and he tried to instill in the board and the staff a need to be an advocate for our customers. Gene led by example; I feel lucky to have been able to work under his guidance."

Heard said he is not sure, yet, about the procedure the water authority must follow to fill Cornelison's seat, the term for which expires next year.

Darrek Cornelison, Gene's eldest son, said his father was a "people person," and was always ready to help out in the community.

"A lot of people trusted him," Darrek Cornelison said. "They wanted him on everything, so he could share his knowledge."

Cornelison was born in Clayton to the late E. H. and Lela Murphy Cornelison. He attended Riverdale School, in the Clayton community, until it burned, and then Clayton School. He graduated from Reinhardt Academy, and attended the University of Georgia.

He was predeceased by his parents, brothers, Levi and Calvin Cornelison, and sister, Diane Cornelison.

Survivors include his wife, Linda Tippens Cornelison, of Ball Ground; sons and daughters-in-law, Darrek and Carla Cornelison and Dony and Renee Cornelison, of Ball Ground; daughters, Denise Owens, of Acworth, and Debra McClure, of Ball Ground; sister and brother-in-law, Brenda and Bobby Mullinax, of Canton; sister-in-law, Kathryn Cornelison, of Ball Ground; 10 grandchildren; 11 great-grandchildren; and several nieces and nephews.

Funeral services were held April 2 at the chapel of South Canton Funeral Home, with the Rev. Billy Cantrell, the Rev. Jerry Clayton and the Rev. J.R. Smith officiating. Memorial donations may be made to the Pilgrim Baptist Church, 101 Stone Wood Trail, Ball Ground, Ga. 30107

South Canton Funeral Home was in charge of arrangements.



Cornelison