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Clinton County News

Covering Albany and Clinton County since 1949



www.clintonnews.net
116 North Washington St. - Albany, Kentucky 42602

Gene Latham Teacher, farmer, businessman, athlete, family man

When you're 88 years old, usually there aren't too many people that show up for your wake. Most of your contemporaries have already passed, and most young people don't know you—or care about such old fashioned things as funeral visitation.

That wasn't the case last Thursday night as hundreds of people literally poured into Talbott Funeral Home, starting in advance of the designated viewing hour, to honor a man who it seems was known to all—and who, with all of his interests and connections, was certainly one of the most popular people of Clinton County.

Gene Latham had connections with so many people in Clinton County. Raised in the Upchurch community (a community which once had its own school and post office, it's one of those little places that has over the years been absorbed by another, as most now call it part of Cartwright Community.

He played basketball at Clinton County High, where he wasn't a great player—but he played both baseball and basketball. As he advised me one time, all the Lathams played something.

From there he went on to college-- initially at Campbellsville and then at Western in Bowling Green. The Hilltopper coach, looking at Gene's stocky build, told him they had a place on the Topper football team (even though he had never played the sport) if he wanted to come out for the squad. He declined, but he and his lifelong friend James Clayton Brown did take up the sport of golf while in Bowling Green. During that time he courted a pretty Tennessee lady, Ruth Upchurch, whom he married in 1959. They had a wonderful marriage for 66 years and had four children, the oldest of whom, Terry, was tragically killed in an auto accident in 1988. That was Gene's hardest lick.

Gene started teaching, at a salary of \$271.77 per month, before he received his college degree. He began his teaching career in the rural schools of Clinton County, initially at Cartwright and most notably at Pleasant Ridge, which was on the road behind Marion Perdue's store that was also the Alpha Post Office. He drew attention county-wide when Pleasant Ridge, never noted for its basketball talent, became competitive in the county grade tournament. It included the Albany school and the majority of the rural schools of the county. In 1963, led by brothers Clyde and Raymond Shelton and Dewey Sutton, they narrowly defeated Shipley by a single point, 35-34, to win the tourney.

When the rural schools of northern Clinton County consolidated in 1964, Gene moved to Clinton Elementary, where he taught Junior High. That is where I first encountered this most interesting, colorful, and entertaining individual. I was fortunate to, by virtue of the alphabet, be placed in Gene's homeroom so I would be spending a lot of the day with him.

Seventh grade with Gene certainly was interesting. It was the first time any of us changed classes. The Albany Elementary students, where I had attended, were upon their move to seventh grade, shifted to the Clinton Elementary building (now the high school) and for the first time we changed classes. That was an experience in itself, and we recall the teachers well: Charles Shelton, a serious educator who taught Kentucky History (no wonder I liked him) and Social Studies. When there was a threat of a teacher's strike he wore a sign that said "In My Heart I Am On Strike"; our friend Jerry Branham, who taught Science and took a genuine interest in all of his students doing well; and the two female teachers, Beatrice Sell and Sallie Mae Dyer. Bob Reneau was our basketball coach. Our memories are mostly of the male teachers, however, because they played softball with us every day, weather permitting.

And they played hard. Gene always played shortstop and, despite his frame, at age 31 it seemed as if he could cover the ground like Maury Wills. Charles Shelton would pitch on the other team. Jerry Branham loved to hit but wasn't much of a fielder, so he would hit and a pinch runner would run the bases for him. The rules were flexible. It was very competitive and great fun.

Wayne County Sheriff's report

Wayne County Sheriff Tim Catron reports the following arrests:

Nickolas Shook of Monticello, Kentucky, was arrested for public intoxication-controlled substance (excludes alcohol), possession of drug paraphernalia, and possession of marijuana.

Robert L. Lowe of Monticello, Kentucky, was ar-

rested for public intoxication-controlled substance (excludes alcohol).

Shook and Lowe were lodged in the Wayne County Detention Center.

The Wayne County Sheriff Office also served Jerry Lowe of Monticello, Kentucky, with a Cumberland County District Court criminal complaint summons for leaving the scene of an ac-

There was also intense competition on the basketball court. The three male teachers all had teams, and Gene gave us green uniforms because he said Clinton County players would often fall apart against a green uniform.

Gene enjoyed his class, and at some time during the day he would sit on his desk and pontificate. As seventh graders, as far as we were concerned, it was The Gospel According To Gene. Gene loved to talk and loved an audience, and captives that we were, we furnished both to him.

Gene retired from the classroom in 1989 after 29 years of teaching. But he would stay busy, and active, for the next years.

Gene bought a 29 acre tract in the Snow community from B.R. Staton in 1968 and he began putting together a farming operation that finally was well over 200 acres. He began milking cattle the same year, and then started raising Limousin cattle at what he called Snowy Mountain Farm. He milked for over twenty years and had a fine Limousin herd at the time of his passing.

One of the more interesting economic pursuits that he had was the tomato business. Gene and his brother Gary, along with James Clayton Brown, started "Brown and Latham Brothers" in the mid-seventies and they raised and sold commercial tomatoes for twenty years, delivering to various Houchens Markets in southern Kentucky and making countless trips to Indianapolis, where they sold their tomatoes by the truckload. He would sit down with Ervin Houchens himself every January and set the year's price. They provided summer employment for many a young man and woman in those years.

When the local Country Club golf course opened for play in July 1969, Gene decided to join the club and began taking golf seriously—as Gene took everything he did seriously. When Gene Latham did anything—be it teaching, farming, or playing a game of checkers—he was serious about it—and played to win. He became a regular at the local course and continued to play until two weeks before his death. He was one of the last originals of Seventy Six Falls Country Club. We all loved to see him on the course, and it was a great day when we heard that Gene was moving his membership back to Seventy Six when the course re-opened last year.

Gene played in every tournament that came along. In 1972 Gene one-putted eight straight holes and won the first two-club golf tournament held at Seventy Six Falls Country Club, with a handicap score of 69. We see that Gene Latham grin in many photos in the Clinton County News over many years, as part of a winning golf team. Gene loved to win. And if he had won anything, whether it be a long drive contest or a scramble, he would love to tell you about it. He was so proud that he could shoot less than his age at 88.

We are wondering how you play golf in Heaven. It wouldn't be right to make every shot, but if you knew your limitations it would be a Heavenly round to hit the ball as you intended to on every stroke, and make every putt that you could reasonably hope to make.

We know Gene is up there now, riding in the cart with Clayton Brown, and they are surely well pleased with their game, probably going head to head with the likes of Arnold Palmer and Sam Snead. And at the end of the round, he would likely go up to old St. Peter himself and tell him how well he played—all the while smiling with that big Gene Latham grin.

With Gene's passing, it's truly the passing of an era. I sent word by Barney a few weeks ago to tell Gene that he was one of my favorite people and I'm so glad I did. I bet for many of you he was one of yours as well.



PUBLIC NOTICE

Public Notice

The Clinton County Extension District's most recent audit and adopted budget can be viewed anytime on the Department for Local Government's Public Portal website. If you would like to view our most recent financial statement, please visit us at our home office located at 2601 Business Hwy 127 North, during our normal office hours of 7:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.. This ad was paid for by Clinton County Extension Office dollars. <http://kydlgweb.ky.gov/> Per KRS 65A.080(2)

47-1c

Public Notice

Notice is hereby given that Janessa Dawn Floyd was appointed by the Clinton District Court on July 9, 2026, as Executrix of the Estate of Johnny Ray Perdue, deceased. Any and all persons having claims against, or owing sums to, said estate are required to present same, properly proven and verified according to law, to the office of the Clerk, Clinton District Court, Albany, Kentucky and to: Janessa Dawn Floyd, 1738 Davis Chapel Road, Alpha, Kentucky 42603 or to Hon. Gary A. Little, Attorney at Law, P.O. Box 68, Albany, Kentucky 42602, within six (6) months from the above date.