



Dr. John Robert Mitchem

September 15, 1930 - October 22, 2022

Dr. John Robert Mitchem, age 92, passed away peacefully at his home in Palatka on Saturday, October 22, 2022. A native of Bessemer City, North Carolina, he was born at home on Monday, September 15, 1930. The US president was Republican Herbert Hoover. He was the 4th of 8 children born to Calvin Clinton Mitchem and Mary Elizabeth Lanier Mitchem who had 5 sons and 3 daughters.

Robert attended Sunny Side Elementary School. He learned early what hard work was. When he was growing up his parents were sharecroppers and worked at the local textile plant and he was in charge of his younger siblings. He would fix cornbread, pintos, and milk for their dinner every night. When Robert was 11 his parents bought 11.45 acres with a four room house. Robert started working at the textile plant at the age of 16 while still in high school. He graduated from Bessemer City High School in 1949. He was the 2nd child in his family to graduate from high school.

Robert vividly remembered when he accepted Christ as his savior. He was 15 years old and washing the families laundry in a big black pot over a fire and then wringing the clothes out to hang on the laundry line. The Baptist minister who was holding a tent revival gave him the plan of salvation and Robert accepted Christ as his savior while doing the family laundry. He was baptized at the First Baptist Church of Bessemer City, NC.

Robert joined the United States Army on February 4, 1950 and shipped out to the Korean War July 18, 1950. His company was the 2nd to land in Korea. There were 175 men in the 82nd AAA Anti-Aircraft Division. He was one of 29 men who survived to come home. The company gave support to the infantry. He made it all the way to the yellow river and stuck his foot in. He landed in Korea as a PFC and was made corporal in August of 1950. He was the head of the personnel carrier and then got a job driving a jeep for the 2nd lieutenant then moved to a halftrack. He was one of the first people shipped home and had 5 battlestars. He returned from the war in May of 1951, stationed at Fort Benning, and granted 30 days leave. He spent 3 days and two nights in a beach house in St. Augustine for \$29 a night. He remembered sitting in a bar, drinking a beer, and looking out at the Bridge of Lions. It was then that he decided he would some day settle in Florida. When he returned to his unit, he had a suntan and everyone decided they wanted to go there as well. In November of 1952 he was hospitalized and transferred to Valley Forge Hospital. After a month and a half he was discharged as 100% disabled.

Robert was working in a shoe store when he and his cousin, Marvin Kizer, got in trouble. He moved to Detroit, Michigan, to get out of trouble and started working in a car factory with one of his brothers. He was hired to drive a brand new Mercury to California and got a ticket in Las Vegas for not having a tag and later found it under one of the seats.

Robert talked to Mr. Burges, the President of Spartanburg Methodist College. The semester had started two weeks prior to their conversation after promising to pay for the semester himself if he didn't pass but succeeded and started his college classes. While attending classes, Robert also worked in the textile mill. There he met one of his best friends, Kazuo Nii. Kasuo was of Japanese descent and was interred with his family in the Japanese Internment Camps after WWII in California. Kasuo also served with Robert in

the Korean war and later came to visit Robert's family in North Carolina.

During his time at Spartanburg Methodist College, Robert was a cheerleader, a member of the Drama Department, Baptist Student President, on the YearBook Committee, and a member of the Business Committee. He graduated from Spartanburg Methodist College in 1955, and Wolford College with BS, 1956. Robert met his wife Beverly during this time. He married Beverly Ann West on Saturday, June 29, 1956. They moved to Memphis, Tennessee in August of the same year to attend the Southern College of Optometry. Three weeks later he was admitted to the VA Hospital and was there for nine months. On March 29, 1958 Robert became a father for the first time when John Robert Mitchem, Jr. was born. He graduated from Southern College of Optometry in 1960 and moved to Orlando, Florida and set up practice. Deborah Ann Mitchem was born on March 25, 1961. While living in Orlando, Robert and his family attended North Park Baptist Church where they met other young married couples with whom they've shared lifelong friendships. Their leaders were the Ackers, and the couples were the Brocks, Ellis', Geigors, Straightons, Eastmans, Howards, Cottons, Holts, Tuckers, Harwells, and Witts. Robert became a deacon in 1964 at Northpark Baptist Church under Dr. Edgar Cooper. He taught the young married men for 6 years. He and Beverly taught the Training Union for the 1st and 2nd graders.

Bobby, their son, passed away from leukemia in May of 1968. In 1969 they adopted Sherri Lynn in February of 1969. Robert was a member of the Optimist Club. When the family moved to Palatka, Florida in 1971 they joined the First Baptist Church of Palatka. There he has served as a deacon, head of the Finance Committee, Chairman of the Deacons, Chairman of the Stewardship Committee, and head of the Young Married Sunday School Department. Active in the Baptist church since the age of 15. Robert enjoyed hunting and fishing in and around his home in Palatka. He also had a rustic

cabin in Colorado where he took friends and family on an annual elk hunting trip every October. In the years before cell phones, the men would check into a nearby hotel to shower and call their wives midway during the trips.

Additional accomplishments of Robert are he was a Rotary Club Member starting in 1972 where he served as the Secretary Treasury, Chairman of the Florida Optometric Association, and served in various capacities at the Rodeheaver Boys Ranch alongside his friend and neighbor, Bill Huntley. Robert believes in the mission of the Boys Ranch to turn boys into good men. One of his proudest memories are the times he served in the First Baptist Church Nursery. He could often be found rocking little ones on a Sunday morning.

In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by siblings: Ruth Virginia Mitchem Neal, Lillian "Mae" Mitchem Mintz, James "Jim" Calvin Mitchem, William "Bill" Alvin Mitchem; and his son, Bobby. He is survived by his wife of 66 years, Beverly Ann (West) Mitchem of Palatka, daughters, Deborah Ann "Debbie" Mitchem Bacon and her husband Greg of Palatka, Sherri Lynn Mitchem Craig Evans and her husband Chad of Orlando; a son, Jerry Chris Mitchem; brothers, Leroy "Roy" Mitchem and his wife Doris of Clover, S.C., Jerry Mitchem and his wife Iris Bedford, VA.; and a sister, Mary Elizabeth Mitchem Crisp. He was a beloved "Papa" to his grandchildren, Lauren Melissa Bacon, Cooper Raydel Craig, Hunter Mitchem Evans, Robert Scott Bacon, Ethan West Evans, and Sadie Elise Evans; and great granddaughter, Charlotte Mayelise Craig. He is also survived by many beloved extended family members & friends.

Funeral services with military honors will be held at 3 pm on Saturday, November 5, 2022 at First Baptist Church in Palatka with Pastor Ron Smith officiating. A visitation, beginning at 2 pm will precede the service. Interment with his beloved son, Bobby, will follow at Woodlawn Cemetery at a later date.

In lieu of flowers, donations in Dr. Mitchem's memory can be made to the Rodeheaver's Boys Ranch, 380 Boys Ranch Road, Palatka, Florida 32177.

St. Johns Family Funeral Home in St. Augustine is in charge of arrangements.

Cemetery Details

Woodlawn Cemetery

400 Woodlawn Cemetery Road
Gotha, FL 34734

Previous Events

Visitation

NOV 5. 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM (ET)

First Baptist Church Palatka
501 Oak Street
Palatka, FL 32177

Funeral Service

NOV 5. 3:00 PM (ET)

First Baptist Church Palatka
501 Oak Street
Palatka, FL 32177

A Reception will follow the Service

NOV 5 (ET)

First Baptist Church Palatka
501 Oak Street
Palatka, FL 32177

Tribute Wall



“ *St. Johns Family Funeral Home created a Tribute Video in memory of Dr. John Robert Mitchem*



St. Johns Family Funeral Home - October 26, 2022 at 09:36 AM

DM

“ *Bob had a wonderful long life and beautiful family. We really had some great times through the years with Bob and Beverly and children. He was a loving and caring generous man. Every time we visited Florida he assured us a great time. Which included helicopter ride, water skiing, catamaran rides and great food and many other things. Bob will always be in our hearts and our memories.*

Leroy and Doris Mitchem and family

Doris Mitchem - November 06, 2022 at 03:01 PM



“ *Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Dr. John Robert Mitchem.*



November 04, 2022 at 02:04 PM