



Dr. Walter Barnes Tatum

April 24, 1938 - August 26, 2016

Dr. W. Barnes Tatum, age 78, passed away on August 26, 2016 at Beacon Place with his wife by his side. Funeral services will be held at 2:00 p.m. on Tuesday, August 30, 2016 at Christ United Methodist Church with the Reverend Mark Vickers officiating.

Dr. Tatum was born in Mobile, Alabama to the late Walter Barnes and Zelle Daly Tatum, Sr. He attended Birmingham-Southern College in Birmingham, Alabama and received a Rotary Foundation Fellowship for a year's study at St. Mary's College, University of St. Andrews, Scotland. He earned his Ph.D. from Duke University in 1966. Born out of his love for historic and rare books, he also attended the University of North Carolina at Greensboro where he earned a Master of Library Science.

Dr. Tatum began his career in 1966 as a faculty member at Huntingdon College in Montgomery, Alabama where he became Chair of the Department of Religion in 1970. He also received the John W. Frazer Faculty Award in 1970. In 1973, Dr. Tatum joined the faculty of Greensboro College as Professor of Religion and Philosophy. He also served as Dean of the College from 1983 to 1987. In 2001, he was named Jefferson-Pilot Professor of Religion and Philosophy. During his tenure, Dr. Tatum received the Outstanding Teacher Award in 1980, was awarded the Moore Award Professorship of Greensboro College in 1993-1994 and the United Methodist Exemplary Faculty Award in 2001.

As a published author, Dr. Tatum's books on the life of Jesus have been used extensively in colleges and universities. Many of his works have appeared in academic journals and publications and he was a featured contributor to the Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception. His stature as a leading authority on the depiction of Jesus in film led to invitations to serve as on-air commentator for television broadcasts by AMC (American Movie Classics), The History Channel, BBC and EO-Television. He has also written for United Methodist publications and has been a well known speaker on both the local and international stage. He has participated in Society of Biblical Literature international meetings, the World Methodist Conference, and has been a frequent presenter at the conferences of the American Academy of Religion. He is a Fellow of The Jesus Seminar, Westar Institute.

Dr. Tatum was a life-long advocate for civil rights and equality involving race, gender and faith as evidenced in his lectures and courses designed to address current issues. He

served as a sponsored Lecturer with the North Carolina Humanities Council in the mid 1990s.

As a student of history, Dr. Tatum enjoyed researching and visiting historic cemeteries in the southeast. He enjoyed baseball and was a regular supporter of the Greensboro Grasshoppers. He was proud of his Methodist heritage and visited historic Methodist sites throughout the U.K. He is a charter member of St. Timothy's United Methodist Church. Dr. Tatum is survived by his loving wife of 23 years, Linda Woodard Tatum; sons Chris Tatum (Sheri) of Charlotte and Rob Tatum (Jason Baxter) of San Francisco; stepsons Chris Wilson (Ai) of Tokyo, Japan and Hal Wilson (Georgia) of Statesboro, GA; grandchildren, Chloe and Connor Tatum, Lanie Gray, Virginia Mae and Hanna Wilson; and sister, Karla Dooling (Jerry) of Dothan, Alabama.

The family will receive friends at Christ United Methodist Church beginning at 12:30 p.m. Those wishing to honor the memory of Dr. Tatum may make memorial donations to Greensboro College, 815 W Market St, Greensboro, NC 27401 or to St. Timothy's United Methodist Church, 5228 Hilltop Road, Jamestown, NC 27282.

Forbis and Dick North Elm Street Chapel is serving the Tatum family and online condolences may be offered at www.forbisanddick.com

Comments



“ My sincere condolences are extended to Dr. Tatum's wife and family. To know Dr. Tatum and to be a student in his classes was a privilege and an exceptional learning opportunity far beyond anything that could be defined by a syllabus. His kindness, his humor, his integrity, and his encouragement to challenge and think beyond the commonly accepted made an indelible impression. Dr. Tatum exemplified what made my time at Greensboro College an experience that I will always remember fondly and with deep gratitude. God bless you with peace and strength in the days to come.

Karen Holton
Greensboro College, Class of 1982
Birmingham, AL

Karen Holton - September 02, 2016 at 12:58 AM



“ There are not enough words to describe Barnes' impact. I feel so lucky to have been in the presence of a person who exemplified what Christ would want us to be like. Especially grateful for the legacy he and wife Linda established in our St Timothy's community. God bless he and Linda for the contributions they have made to St Timothy's UMC.

Rich Rainey

rich rainey - August 31, 2016 at 10:33 AM



“ My class at GC was 78 and that was very early in Dr. Tatum's career. A bunch of us day students were playing around throwing a Frizzbee in the lobby of Cowan Building. The door opened on the elevator and Barnes walked out. Looked at us, looked at the Frizzbee and then grabbed the disk and ran back into the waiting elevator! We started yelling that he was a thief and ran up the steps trying to catch him. When we got to the third floor, Dr Tatum had locked himself in his office and would not come out. That was the first time I ever saw Dr. Barnes Tatum. And from then on we were friends. When someone passes that was so well respected, I like to remember all the times we laughed together. I will miss you Dr. Tatum.

John Hitchcock, class 78 - August 30, 2016 at 06:35 PM



“ Barnes and I worked together from 1986 to 2005. While our views were sometimes divergent, that was only a lingering moment. His thoughts and views gave light where darkness tended to prevail. His grasp of what was important and relevant gave me the great gift of a colleague that valued our mutual vision of making Greensboro College a place where wisdom flourished for the student. His insight into the impact of religious structure on society had a profound impact, particularly on the adult students in the BBA program he helped me craft. His legacy will be long and enduring. How I miss him already. The memory of our frequent chats are stored in a secret place that I often visit. Thanks for your gifts to me, Barnes.

My thoughts and prayers are with you, Linda.

Thomas O. Jones, Jr., DBA
Fred L. Proctor Senior Professor of Business

Thomas O. Jones, Jr. - August 30, 2016 at 09:41 AM



“ In 1991, when I was considering which college to attend, I had a scholarship interview at Greensboro College. One of my interviewers was Dr. Tatum. He had read my application and noticed that I had an interest in space travel. He asked me, "Suppose we did find life on other planets, will they have faith in a higher power? If so, what will it look like?" I was flabbergasted by the question because I had never thought of it before. The one word that came to my mind was "monotheistic," so I built my answer around it. Keep in mind, I had never read "Stranger in a Strange Land," and only knew that it was a lyric in Billy Joel's "We Didn't Start the Fire." He was impressed by my answer and continued to bring it up years after I attended G.C. and graduated. Little did I know that we would read this Sci-Fi Christian Classic in Intro to New Testament. Dr. Tatum and I grokked!

I also took Greek with Dr. Tatum, I think four semesters. One tidbit that was made infamous by the "Chronicle of Higher Education," the official course title was "Introduction to Hellenistic Greek;" however, when I received my course schedule, the computer printout read "Introduction to Hell!" As my learning progressed, I advanced to "Elementary Hell" and "Intermediate Hell."

Years after I graduated, my friend, fellow G.C. Alum, and master sacred musician, Steve Cooper, shared a mutual friendship and admiration for Dr. Tatum. One day, Steve called me up and said, "Dr. Tatum is on HISTORY discussing "Jesus of Nazareth!" We were both big fans of his! Steve and I still sing, "To thee G.C. we lift our praise!" when we see each other!

Finally, my greatest memory that I will cherish is taking my final exam for Black and Feminist Theology at the Woolworth's lunch counter, now the International Civil Rights Center & Museum, with my fellow classmates, Rachel Guthrie Priestley and Kevin Beard. The historical, educational, and theological implications of that incident has placed an indelible mark of who I am as a human being, pastor, and theologian. Thanks, Dr. Tatum!

Ed McKinney - August 30, 2016 at 06:01 AM



“ Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Dr. Walter Barnes Tatum.



August 29, 2016 at 09:28 PM



“ JOHN MOORE BULLARD purchased the Fiery Lily and Rose for the family of Dr. Walter Barnes Tatum.



JOHN MOORE BULLARD - August 29, 2016 at 08:17 PM



“ I was a Religion & Philosophy Major at Greensboro College Class of 1978. Barnes was my academic adviser, Christian Guru, mentor, and friend. He taught me to view the world with the Bible in one hand and a newspaper in the other.

I always appreciated his dry wit and insight. He also had the coolest facial hair of anyone I ever knew. He is relatively irreplaceable.

Ivan Siler

Ivan Siler - August 29, 2016 at 06:13 PM



“ I graduated from Greensboro College in 2009. During my studies there, Dr. Tatum was very influential regarding my decision to become a religion major. While I've forgiven him for that, I'll still never forget his daily banter, humor, and quick wit. He was truly a remarkable man, and I will always think of him fondly.

Rachel Morton - August 29, 2016 at 04:57 PM



“ I am so sorry to hear of our loss of Dr. Tatum. He was one of the first people I met at Greensboro College and one of the dearest to me. He never stopped learning and did not expect anyone else to, either. He asked students "What did you learn today?" and now I do that too. Peace to Dr. Tatum and condolences to his loved ones.

Christine Whittington, Greensboro College library director, 2002-2014

Christine Whittington - August 29, 2016 at 04:11 PM



“ I had the pleasure of meeting Dr. Tatum at Hal's dissertation defense and subsequent celebration. We had a wonderful conversation. His positive influence on Hal was evident every step of the way. Here is to a life well lived.

Love & Peace,
Lars

Lars - August 29, 2016 at 08:06 AM



“ Linda, so sorry to hear of Barnes' passing. I can remember when you two got married - 1993. Can't believe it's been that long ago! May the Lord bless and comfort you.

Faye Jolley

Faye Jolley - August 29, 2016 at 07:04 AM



“ I was a student at GC 1990-1993. I was introduced and studied the old and New Testament with Dr. Tatum. He was an awesome man and a great scholar who readily shared his knowledge with his students. I admired this man so much. I occasionally saw him on TV discussing the existence of Jesus. Upon my graduation from GC with a degree in Spanish Ed., dr. Tatum gave me as a graduation present of a Spanish Bible. I cherish this gift and he will always hold a special place in my heart. Dr. Tatum was a remarkable man and Heaven has gained an angel.

Victoria Lawton - August 28, 2016 at 08:41 PM



“ studied old testament under dr. t...did not know i was at a methodist college until i learned "the bible" (both old and new testaments) was mandatory...shocker!...we were standing in the doorway when i was informed of this..I said, "wow...and u do this for a living?" ,,,needless to say... i earned a "d" so i took the class again with dr.b....went on to become a high school teacher...(also got my MA) I am now retired...i use to see dr. t on the history channel often...and ran in to him once in a book store ,,,we chatted. he was a good man

Deborah Fields - August 28, 2016 at 07:38 PM



“ We are both saddened to hear of Barnes passing, he will be truly be missed by many. Our prayer for you and the family is that you feel peace and comfort during the difficult days ahead.
Blessings,
Lloyd and Pam Stanley

Pamela Stanley - August 28, 2016 at 05:13 PM



“ Dear Linda,
My condolences to you and the family at the passing of Barnes, a true child of God and a wonderful person.

Sincerely,

Vernice Parker

Vernice Parker - August 28, 2016 at 04:54 PM



“ I graduated from Greensboro College without having the Dr. Tatum classroom experience. I am pleased though that I got to know him, as well as Linda, while I worked at GC. I always enjoyed talking with him; he was always interesting and interested in what I had to say as well. Thankfully I had the opportunity to know him as a friend, colleague and as a boss. What an exceptional man! My condolences to the family. I hold the wonderful Linda and his sons in my thoughts and prayers.

Carol Thomas GC 1977; employee 1978-1992

Carol Thomas - August 28, 2016 at 03:16 PM



“ My deepest condolences. Dr. Tatum truly did leave a mark on his students. As a former student who graduated in 2005, he was a wonderful professor and I was actually lucky enough to have him as my advisor for 2 years. Great guidance and advice! He will be missed.

Ann Wyrick - August 28, 2016 at 03:06 PM



“ I graduated from GC in 1998 as a theatre major. But I took a class with Dr Tatum every semester I was there. He was a brilliant, compelling, and hilarious teacher. We had the same birthday. I loved him dearly. So much love and sympathy to his family, and the GC family that were lucky enough to know him.

ann mahoney - August 28, 2016 at 02:51 PM



“ To the Family of Dr. Tatum:
How fortunate we are if we can name one memorable professor who has come into our lives. I had Dr. Tatum for two semesters in 1973 and 1974, and he was not only incredibly knowledgable, but used humor (like his "Bullshit Spray" when we handed in our papers)! Though he had hundreds of students over the years, he took special notice of each one of us. One day he asked me about my tennis game...He will be missed and remembered by many whose lives he has enriched.

Elin Widdifield, 1973-1977 GC

Elin Widdifield - August 28, 2016 at 02:49 PM



“ To Dr. Tatum's Family,
I am so very sorry for your tremendous loss. As a religion major at Greensboro College, I think I had Dr. Tatum for at least one class a semester! He always kept me "on my toes" and we didn't always agree on things. He was a great professor and taught me much. He is sorely missed.

Sue Albright Anderson, GC 1973 - 1977

Sue A. Anderson - August 28, 2016 at 02:17 PM



“ As a fellow academic in the field of religion and film, I shared many, many fond moments in conversation with Barnes. His intellect, his wit, his wry sense of humor, and cultured, Southern savor-faire... All these made him special and unique. So, too, did his willingness to share his copious knowledge of all things related to his discipline; in that regard, I owe him much. He was a true maverick in his field. My condolences to you, Linda, and to your children.

Sheila J. Nayar - August 28, 2016 at 11:19 AM



“ The perfect eccentric professor - I always smile when I think about Dr. Tatum. When I arrived at Greenboro, I had him as my professor in my first year, He was interesting and fun to talk to, and welcoming of discussion and debate. He was also very warm and helpful to me when I started looking at universities to transfer to in California - knowing a little about some of the institutions I was looking at, he gave me some advise and offered to help me in any way he could. I will always remember him fondly and give my condolences to his family.

Greg Allwood (at Greenboro College 1998 - 2000)

Greg Allwood - August 28, 2016 at 09:19 AM



“ Dr. Tatum will always hold a special place in my heart. He was more than a professor, he was a mentor and friend. With as any one of his students knows....a little bit (ok a large amount) of comedian thrown in there. The world was a much better place becuae of Dr. Tatum.

Heather Harris Totty - August 28, 2016 at 08:31 AM



“ Dr. Tatum meant so much to Greensboro College and its students over the many years he spent serving our community. Mentor, friend, confidant, professor, colleague, scholar - just a few of the words I have heard used to describe him by alumni, students, and staff - both as his student and later as a coworker.

One of my favorite memories shows how he never took himself too seriously. I had Dr. Tatum for New Testament my freshman year at GC. He would rig the door if people were constantly late to class to either lock the door with a table or knock a chair over to bring extra attention to the fact the student was late again - all in good fun. He would always welcome the student even if they were late. There was one day at the end of the semester that Dr. Tatum didn't arrive on time. We all tried to rig the door as we had watched him do it many times, but failed. In his mid 60's, Dr. Tatum opened the door, laughed a good laugh, climbed over the table and sat his stuff down in class. He then looked at us and said "no, THIS is how you do it," turned and reset the trap showing us our error. It took him probably 10 minutes into class to finally stop laughing at our antics. His personality made him an expert at working with college students. I can also share many memories of the things I did learn in his class, even down to the details of our final exam included my poor attempt at drawing of the beast of Revelation.

When I rejoined GC as a staff member, Dr. Tatum came to visit me and said he was glad to have me back. I was in awe that he remembered me, I only had him for one class, and he had taught so many students over the years.

My deepest condolences to Linda, Dr. Tatum's children and extended family, and all of those who will miss his presence.

Kristen Brown - August 28, 2016 at 08:25 AM



“ I was a former student of Dr Tatum. I enjoyed his classes, but I enjoyed his spirit more. He left a lasting impression and opened my eyes to Religion in a new way. He will be greatly missed

Jennifer Horsley - August 28, 2016 at 08:22 AM



“ I worked with Barnes at Greensboro College from 2004-2011. I was in the History Department and taught courses on the Middle East, and I always enjoyed my conversations with Barnes about religion and culture. He was a good person, and I am very sorry for your loss.

April Najjaj - August 27, 2016 at 10:19 PM



“ I am sad to hear of you loss Linda, and family Barnes and I worked together at Greensboro College from 1977-1994. I always enjoyed our chats . So young to leave us, knowing he is no longer suffering. Darlene Stanley, MA LPC.



Darlene Stanley - August 27, 2016 at 09:11 PM



“ He was my favorite professor. Prayers to his family at this time of loss. Kelly Marie Rexer Greensboro College alumni

Kelly Marie Rexer - August 27, 2016 at 03:13 PM



“ The Jesus Seminar has lost a good friend and colleague with Barnes' passing. And critical scholarship has lost a creatively inquiring mind.

Charles W. Hedrick

Distinguished Professor Emeritus

Missouri State University

charles W. Hedrick - September 14, 2016 at 11:29 AM