

William Hartley Jones, 80, died peacefully in his sleep at Westminster Canterbury retirement center in Winchester, Virginia, in the early hours of May 2, following a short illness. Funeral services are scheduled for May 11, at 11:00 a.m., at Christ Episcopal Church, Winchester.

Bill was born in Winona, Mississippi, on February 23, 1938, to the Rev. Winfred Pipes Jones and Eugenia Lewis Brookfield Jones. His father was an Episcopal priest, which meant they moved several times during Bill's childhood, but most of his youth was spent in Palatka, Florida. He met his wife, Kay (Katharine Davis Mounger), when they were both students at the University of Mississippi. Family legend has it that she was a freshman, washing dishes at an Episcopal Church club for students, and he was a sophomore, drying the dishes, and they were together ever after. They married on July 1, 1961, a year after Bill graduated with a BA in history and political science.

He went to work for the Social Security Administration while still in college and maintained a career with them until his retirement in 1995, after 35 years. Much of that time was spent in Middle Tennessee, and most of that in the town of Columbia, though they also lived first in Cookeville and later in Hampshire. Mostly he worked as a field representative, which placed him most directly with the individuals receiving Social Security services. He would act as "the government man" in tiny towns around the region, setting up his table once a week to make sure everybody had the help they needed, visiting clients in jails and hospitals and nursing homes, lunching with local senior citizens groups, and learning lip reading and CPR. In return, a number of grateful clients were in the habit of remembering him at Christmastime, with gifts ranging from ceramicware produced by the senior citizens clubs to baby-food jars full of moonshine, slipped into the mailbox when no one was looking. However, he also investigated fraud cases for the SSA, which led to his aphorism, "Just because they're old, doesn't mean they're honest."

At the same time, he and Kay "bought the farm" in 1980 – 20 acres in Maury County, outside of Columbia, where they mostly raised sheep but, at any given time, also had chickens, cows, goats, ducks, geese, horses, rabbits, and cats and dogs – anything but pigs, at Bill's insistence. This life was not without incident – at one time, he fell out of a downed tree he was cutting for wood into a creekbed when his son's foot slipped off the clutch on the tractor tied to the tree. Bill broke several ribs and his arm in three places, which is how he discovered his allergy to codeine and how to remove a wedding ring from a swollen finger without cutting it off. Another time, a ram named Christopher (in keeping with tradition, Bill used only family names for his offspring and named the ram for his new great-nephew) which was close to the size of a small pony decided he didn't like Bill in his territory and butted Bill so hard he knocked him to the ground and left him so bruised it was difficult to walk. Bill responded by picking up a 2x4 and whacking Christopher between the eyes. The two kept a respectful distance from each other from then on.

After 12 years of this and just as they were beginning to turn a profit, Bill and Kay decided they had had enough of being tied to animal care and moved deeper into the country, buying 175 acres of woods, creeks, and pasture in adjacent Lewis County. They added a small cottage and an antique log cabin and ran the place as Ridgetop Bed and Breakfast until they decided they were too isolated to safely "age in place" and that they wanted to be nearer their children, who were in the Washington, DC region. They moved to Winchester in 2010 after more than 45 years in Middle Tennessee and to Westminster Canterbury in 2017.

In the meantime, through their Lewis County years and continuing to the present, they travelled. At one point, Bill estimated he had visited 30 countries, including Morocco, China, Burma, France, Scotland, and Peru. It is indicative that Bill's first trip out of the country—besides an early jaunt camping in

Canada and a couple of trips to the Dominican Republic, to visit his son Davis in the Peace Corps—was not to Paris or London or more typical retiree destinations, but to Nepal and Thailand, where he and Kay trekked in the Himalayas and went on a wildlife tour through the Thai jungle on the back of an elephant. At the time of his death, Bill was scheduled to go on an autumn tour of Romania and Hungary.

Bill was an environmentalist before the word was in common currency, backpacking the Appalachians so early on he started with a canvas pack and was sometimes considered THE “old man of the mountains” in later years. Recently, a clerk at R.E.I. was amazed at his low membership number, and he still has the 1974 catalogue. An encounter with a bear that left him, literally, up a tree and with a lifelong scar from the bear’s paw, combined with an increasingly bad back, led to him giving up on heavy-duty backpacking. He continued as much activism as the Hatch Act allowed, campaigning for Tennessee’s wild rivers in particular. He was scrupulous, perhaps overly so, about observing the letter of the law that forbade government workers from interfering too much in politics, but upon retirement, a multitude of signs for liberal political candidates started popping up in his front yard, as if he was suddenly freed. He may have been the only white man in Lewis County, Tennessee, to have voted for Hillary Clinton in the 2008 presidential primary. (Kay voted for Obama, which prompted much... discussion.)

Throughout his life, Bill was an active and devout member of the Episcopal Church, at St. Peter’s in Columbia and most recently, as a member and volunteer at Christ Church in Winchester. He also was a regular volunteer in the wildflower section of the Virginia State Arboretum at Blandy Farm and was active in the Teresa’s Wildflower Garden at Westminster Canterbury. He had also been an active member of the Tennessee Native Plants Society and helped the group compile and publish a guide to the wildflowers of Tennessee—a guide that included many of his own pictures. Other hobbies included painting model soldiers, and he developed late in life a love for classical music, particularly opera.

He is survived by Kay, his wife of 57 years; two children, Katharine Eugenia (Kathy) Jones and William Davis (Davis) Jones; a daughter-in-law, Rosario (Charo) de la Rosa Jones; and a granddaughter, Julia Eugenia Jones. Other survivors include an older brother, John Ackland Jones, and his wife, Shirley Jones; an older sister, Winifred Pipes Jones Peebles; and a younger sister, Eugenia Lewis Jones Lagrone; two brothers-in-law, Samuel Gwin Mounger and Whitman Davis Mounger and their wives, Suzanne and Liz; eleven nieces and nephews; and numerous great-nieces and great-nephews. His mother’s family had deep roots in the Northern Virginia/Piedmont/Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, having settled in Fauquier County in the wake of the French and Indian War and spread from there. Bill always found it ironic that he wound up in Frederick County and used to say, “All this traveling and moving, and where are we ending up? One county over from where we started.” His body is to be cremated and the ashes interred at Christ Church, Winchester.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks that donations be made to Christ Church, to Episcopal Relief and Development, or to Doctors Without Borders.

“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.” 2 Timothy 4:7-8.

“For I am sure that neither death nor life, neither the present nor future, nor any powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” Romans, 8:38-39.