



Mr. John Clark Pepper

January 27, 1943 - November 10, 2024

John Clark Pepper died Sunday morning, November 10, 2024, at the Highlands Health and Rehabilitation Center in Scottsboro following several weeks of hospitalization for cardiac and respiratory problems. He was 81 years old.

John was born January 27, 1943, in Union City, TN. He was the second of two children born to Ruth McAnulty Pepper, an educator, and Dr. Morris Pepper, a minister in the Cumberland Presbyterian Church and long-time pastor of the Scottsboro congregation.

John was a 1961 graduate of Scottsboro High School where he distinguished himself as a formidable presence on the football field. He was voted by his classmates as “Most Courteous” in his senior year. After graduation, he attended Bethel College in McKenzie, TN.

The majority of his working years were spent with the Cornelius Corporation, Scottsboro Wholesale, and with Scottsboro’s sanitation department.

John’s friends are familiar with anecdotes of his physical strength. He’s known for hoisting a cotton bale and carrying it far enough to make good on bets about his ability to accomplish the feat. As an employee of the sanitation department, he took pride in his ability to lift any load left on the curb. As a

practical joke, his coworkers planted a trash can filled with concrete by the roadside. When John couldn't lift the can, he walked away from the truck, intent on walking to city hall to resign his job, saying he was no longer capable of performing his duties. His coworkers owned up the ploy, and John's resignation was refused.

Troubled by emotional conflicts as a younger adult, John emerged from his complications to be an ardent advocate for the wider availability of mental health care and for erasing the stigmas attached to victims seeking treatment for behavioral issues.

He was a passionate advocate of civil rights. In his memoirs written for the Jackson County Historical Association, he deeply lamented the injustices of segregation in his hometown. He was a vocal critic of those who failed to grasp the urgency of climate change.

He was a devoted student of poetry, particularly the works of Frost and Coleridge. He possessed extraordinary recall and committed several long poetic works to memory. His spontaneous recitations were the only instance of the usually reserved John being comfortable as the center of attention. An early volume of Robert Frost's works lay by his bedside in his last days.

Survivors include a sister, Beverly Pepper Brown (m. Dr. Paul B. Brown, deceased) and his niece Shelley Ruth Brown, both of Memphis, and two grand nephews. He is preceded in death by his parents and a nephew, Paul Christopher Brown.

John penned dozens of letters and cards every week. He mailed over 200 Christmas cards every holiday season. His close friends will miss his seeing his unique scrawl and reading his quirky insights.

Graveside Service and burial will be held at 3:00 p.m. on Sunday, November 24, 2024 at Cedar Hill Cemetery.

Those who were fortunate enough to make his acquaintance in his later years will celebrate his gentleness, humility, and humanity.

The Family of the late John Clark Pepper requests that in lieu of flowers that a donation be made in his memory to the Cumberland Presbyterian Church Deacons Benevolent Fund or a Charity of your choice.

Arrangements Entrusted to Scottsboro Funeral Home

Cemetery Details

Cedar Hill Cemetery

210 South Cedar Hill Drive
Scottsboro, AL 35768
(256) 609-8166

Previous Events

Graveside Service

NOV **24**. 3:00 PM (CT)

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210 South Cedar Hill Drive
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Tribute Wall

PR

“ I did not know the young John Pepper. I met him when he became my neighbor in 2005. John was truly a gentle, caring man. We became close friends in his last years and we enjoyed many conversations on various subjects. He was kind to his friends and helped them in any way he could.
My prayers are for Beverly, Shelley, the nephews and the friends who will miss him.

Pat Rusidoff - November 17, 2024 at 04:40 PM

SS

So sad to hear of John's passing. Mike and I corresponded with him after Jack (his cousin) passed away. When we didn't hear from him around Christmas, we wondered... We enjoyed getting to know him through our correspondence. I believe he got his writing talent from his father (Great Uncle Morris). We will keep John's letters with the writings we have that Jack saved from Uncle Morris.

Mike & Sally Surginer (Jack's son and DIL)

281-352-1872

Sally Surginer - March 18, 2025 at 10:43 PM

PB

“ I didn't see John very often throughout the years, because of the distance. But we were in touch more in the last three years when he became a good friend to Evelyn, my four-year old great granddaughter. Probably because of family connections, this quiet, gentle kind-hearted man delighted this little girl often with cards, books, art supplies, stickers, small gifts, and a CD with lullabies when she was just a toddler. All arrived carefully wrapped and mailed. An unusual friendship continued as "thank you" notes and pictures from Evelyn always followed John's thoughtful gifts. I'll always be grateful for his kindness and generosity that made an impression on a little girl he had never met.

Phyllis Brown - November 16, 2024 at 10:33 PM

BB

That is such a beautiful tribute , Phyllis. Thank you very much. John very much enjoyed the long distance connection with Evelyn. Being in contact with her gave him joy.

Beverly Brown - December 01, 2024 at 01:10 AM

LM

“ Gentle, generous and beautiful soul. John will truly be missed by the Moore family, especially Edwin with whom he became pen pals in recent years. Sending our love and prayers to Beverly, Shelley, Thaxton, Noland and all of John's family and friends.



Lisa Moore - November 15, 2024 at 02:00 PM

KE

I have enjoyed letters from John for 58 years. He was generous, thoughtful and caring. He will be missed. His family is in my thoughts and prayers.

Ketti - November 22, 2024 at 10:12 AM

BB

Just saw your text Ketti. Tried to respond, but message disappeared! Want to thank you and say that you and your family were very important to John! He was so glad that David's family honored him by keeping in contact. He loved corresponding with Kate and Ketti, especially. And he felt honored by the special Christmas gifts you always sent. Thank you for showing love to him and concern. That was mutual. I love you all, too! And especially for your continuing contact with John. Love, Beverly

Beverly Brown - August 22, 2025 at 12:51 PM