



Dr. Lee Norcross Allen Jr.

April 16, 1926 - December 16, 2024

Lee Norcross Allen, historian, professor, writer, and devoted husband, father and grandfather, died at his home in suburban Birmingham AL, on December 16, 2024. He was 98 years old.

Dr. Allen was professor of history at Samford University for 40 years, 1961-2001. During those years he was also the founding dean of the School of Graduate Studies in 1965, and he was dean of Howard College of Arts and Sciences 1975-1990. In 1990-2001, he was University Historian for Samford, creating the manuscript for "College to University: Samford on Lakeshore." Along with the manuscript is a voluminous historical archive of Samford, housed in the university Special Collections Department. Prior to moving to Samford, he taught history at Eastern Baptist College (Eastern University) in suburban Philadelphia, 1952-1961.

A memorial service will be held at Mountain Brook Baptist Church on Friday December 27, 2024 at 1:30 in the afternoon. Family will greet visitors following the service. Because of renovation in the building, the service will be held in the gymnasium, which is entered from Overbrook Road. The service will be streamed from the church webpage, <https://mbbc.org/watch>.

Dr. Allen was born in Shawmut AL April 16, 1926, son of Leland Norcross Allen and Dorothy Whitaker Allen. His first months were spent in Ithica NY, while his father obtained a master's degree at Cornell. The family moved to Montgomery, AL for his father's career with the state and federal Departments of Agriculture.

Starting at age 5 he was a student in private and public schools in Montgomery. At age 16 he enrolled in Alabama Polytechnic Institute (now Auburn University). Studies were interrupted by his being drafted into the US Army, to serve in World War II, 1944-1946. Severe training injuries confined him to hospitals for more than one year. After the war, he returned to Auburn to study history and political science. He received the BS degree in 1948 and MS degree in 1949. As a research fellow, he wrote his often-cited master's thesis, "Woman Suffrage in Alabama."

He served in residence at the University of Pennsylvania 1949-1952 as Harrison Fellow. He was awarded the PhD with distinction in 1955, after completing his dissertation entitled "The Underwood Presidential Movement of 1924."

Lee Allen was baptized at age 12 at the historic First Baptist Church of Montgomery. In Birmingham he was first a member of Ruhama Baptist Church, then of Mountain Brook Baptist Church. He was a charter member of Meadow Brook Baptist Church. In each of his Birmingham churches, he served as deacon, teacher, historian, and church clerk. His work as church clerk at Mountain Brook Church covered 30 years, and he was named Life Deacon.

He was a member of numerous historical societies, both religious and secular in focus. He was president of both the Southern Baptist Historical Society and of the Alabama Baptist Historical Society, receiving several citations from each. He also served as a member of the American, Southern, Birmingham, and Jefferson County Historical Associations. For many years he was a board member and newsletter editor of the Alabama Historical Association, of which he was president 1993-1994.

He was a prolific writer, especially concerning Baptist history. He co-authored the history of Ruhama Baptist Church. He wrote two consecutive histories each of First Baptist Church of Montgomery, of Mountain Brook Baptist Church, and of the Birmingham Baptist Association. He wrote histories of five other churches, of the history of the City of Boaz, Alabama, and of the history

of Montgomery Baptist Hospitals. He was co-author of two biographies: *Courage to Care: The Story of Ida V. Moffett* and *Christ Is Our Salvation: The Life of Paul P. Piper*.

He was a member and president of Shades Valley Rotary Club, editing its "Script" newsletter and writing its history. He maintained perfect attendance until after retirement, and he was recognized by Rotary International as a Paul Harris Fellow.

He was listed in *Who's Who in America* from 1970-1971, and he was recognized in other *Who's Who* collections.

He taught Baptist history and missions for New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary's Birmingham Center 1985-1988. He led summer training for teachers for the Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge and at Eastern University. He served on the Selective Service System Local Board 73 for 18 years. He was founder and executive director of the Alabama Academy of Distinguished Authors.

In 1963, he married Catherine Bryant Allen. During their 61-year marriage, Lee and Catherine widely traveled worldwide, and they enjoyed hosting international guests. One who became like family is his protégé, Sitao Chen of Shanghai.

He is survived by his wife, Catherine Allen, son Dr. Leland Norcross Allen III (Traci) of Mountain Brook; daughter Leslie Catherine Allen, a restaurateur of Nashville TN. His granddaughters are Lane Allen of New York City and Mary Lee Allen of Atlanta GA. He was preceded in death by his parents and by his younger brother, Hilary Whitaker Allen of Dallas TX. He is survived by Hilary's wife Patricia of Dallas TX, nephew, Hilary Whitaker Allen Jr. of Denver CO, and niece, Leigh Allen of Denton TX.

He was also loved by and welcomed into Catherine's large family including siblings Leonard P. Bryant (Susan, deceased) and Mark P. Bryant (Ruth Ann), all of Birmingham; also Johnny P. Bryant of Liberty Hill TX. His late sister-in-law was Alice Bryant Lenahan (Jim) of Reseda CA. Surviving Bryant family

nieces and nephews include Adam Bryant (Meredith) of Winchester MA, Sean Lenahan (Charlotte) and Ian Lenahan (Evelyn) of the Los Angeles area, and Lindsay Bryant of Tuscaloosa AL. His late nephew was Dr. Ben Bryant of Lubbock TX. Four great-nieces survive.

The family thanks the caregivers who have aided in his care: Don Thomas, Torie Perry, Ronnie Perry, Polly Young, and Renee Bellard.

Previous Events

Memorial Service

DEC 27. 1:30 PM (CT)

Mountain Brook Baptist Church
3631 Montevallo Rd
Birmingham, AL 35213-4205
(205) 871-0331

Tribute Wall

OT

“ *Oleg and Natasha Turlac. purchased the Sentiments of Serenity Spray for the family of Dr. Lee Norcross Allen Jr..*



Oleg and Natasha Turlac. - December 23, 2024 at 10:01 PM

SC

“ *Sitao Chen planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Dr. Lee Norcross Allen Jr..*

Sitao Chen - December 23, 2024 at 04:54 AM

SC

“ *Sitao Chen purchased the Divine Peace Bouquet for the family of Dr. Lee Norcross Allen Jr..*



Sitao Chen - December 23, 2024 at 04:54 AM



“ *Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Dr. Lee Norcross Allen Jr..*



December 19, 2024 at 12:24 PM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Dr. Lee Norcross Allen Jr..



December 19, 2024 at 11:28 AM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Dr. Lee Norcross Allen Jr..

December 19, 2024 at 11:28 AM



“ Such a loss to so many is the passing of Dr Allen. I knew him as a student from my Samford years (class of '84) and his teaching me during my time in the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary during the years it was held on campus at Samford in the mid 1980's. His knowledge and influence of Baptist history continues to have impact through so many students he trained to appreciate and value our heritage as Baptists. Prayers for your family as you give thanks to God for His influence throughout your family.

C. Phillip Herring - December 19, 2024 at 03:13 AM

PG

“ In early 1980's Dr Lee and Catherine took a mission trip through Pioneer efforts and came to Saratoga Wy where I pastored. He taught us through the week and then celebrated Easter Sunday with us. It was such an encouragement to us. My wife & I plus the small congregation were most blessed to have someone so knowledgeable to teach and encourage us. I laugh now that on Easter Sunday I did not give up my pulpit and made him listen to me preach.

Pastor Kerry Groce - December 18, 2024 at 09:12 PM

MC

“ We have lost a good man! Thank God for his presence while he was with us!

Martha Ann Cooper - December 18, 2024 at 08:11 PM