



Benjamin McGilmer, Jr

August 13, 1945 - June 6, 2020

Benjamin McGilmer, Jr. was born on August 13, 1945, in Marysville, Tennessee, and passed away peacefully, June 6, 2020, at the Atlanta Veterans Administration Medical Center in Decatur, Georgia.

Ben was the first of seven children born to Clara Mae Alcorn and Benjamin McGilmer, Sr. He was raised in Detroit, Michigan. During his early years in school, he excelled academically and athletically. Tall and slender, often introducing himself as “Skinny Benny, good for 20”, he was an All State athlete in basketball, football, and track and field. He graduated from Northwestern High School in 1964.

His athletic prowess caught the attention of college coaches throughout the nation, which afforded him several scholarships. He accepted a basketball scholarship from the University of Iowa and spent his first two years of college there. His academic and athletic career came to an abrupt halt when, after his sophomore year, he was drafted into the U. S. Army. During his service in the military, he played on the All Army Basketball team. Playing their best, the team was undefeated due to the looming threat from their coach to send them to Vietnam if they ever lost.

While stationed at Fort Lewis in Tacoma, Washington, he met and married Margaret Mary Zittel in 1968. After completing his tour with the U. S. Army, the couple returned to the University of Iowa where he played on what became

known as the "Greatest team in Iowa's Men's Basketball history." During his time playing for Iowa, the Hawkeyes were undefeated in the Big 10 Conference, which resulted in them playing in the 1969 NCAA Championship Tournament.

During his time at the University of Iowa, Ben became the proud father of his only child, Christopher Jordan McGilmer.

He received draft offers from the National Basketball Association (NBA) Seattle Supersonics (now Oklahoma City Thunder) in 1969 and the Baltimore Bullets (now Washington Wizards) in 1970. He turned down the offers and decided to take his skills to Europe with his family accompanying him.

Ben started out playing for famed basketball coach Jim McGregor and the traveling Gillette All-Stars, helping to spread the first wave of American style basketball throughout Europe. He ended up playing on several European teams including Belgium, France, and Turkey. After retiring from playing basketball, he coached the Turkish Junior National Team.

After his coaching career, he moved to Spain in 1990 and opened a fine jewelry boutique on the Costa del Sol in Mijas, Spain. While in Spain, he helped to establish another world record by playing in an historic game that was designated by the Guinness Book of World Records as the longest marathon basketball game ever played (25 hours and 54 minutes.) This event took place in 1992 in Malaga, Spain.

While in spending many years in Europe, he engaged in several languages and became fluent in French, Turkish and Spanish.

After spending several years in Spain, he returned to the United States in 2007. Soon after his arrival, he met Faye Tate, his beloved companion, at a quilting workshop in Atlanta, Georgia. For several years the couple enjoyed numerous shared activities such as quilting, travelling, and attending concerts

and plays.

Later, Ben studied Computer Networking Systems at ITT Technical Institute in Atlanta, Georgia, and graduated with a degree in Computer Programming in 2011. He also worked as a substitute teacher in the DeKalb County School System.

His hobbies included attending concerts and plays, playing the guitar, and watching movies and sports.

His passion, however, was spending as much time as possible with his three magnificent grandchildren.

He is fondly remembered by his son, Dr. Christopher J. McGilmer and his grandchildren Kaya, Maxwell, and Chai as well as his devoted companion, Faye Tate.

Additionally, his memory is cherished by his two remaining siblings, Weldon McGilmer and Brenda McGilmer, as well as nieces and nephews Michelle, Eric, William, Anthony, Crystal, Te'Igo, T. J. and Zaire and a host of grand nieces and nephews (all of Nashville, Tennessee), along with several friends, particularly his devoted friends Dave Phillips and Nell McGaffie.

Celebration of Life Services (Invitation Only) for Benjamin McGilmer, Jr. will be held at 1:00PM on Sunday, July, 12, 2020. These services will be recorded and streamed live. In the event the service is interrupted at any time due to technical issues, the entire service will be uploaded and available for viewing on this link later the same day. Please copy and paste the link to share it, or simply click on the link to view the service.

<https://vimeo.com/435191958>

Services entrusted to Gregory B. Levett & Sons Funeral Home, Avondale-Scottsdale Chapel. 351 N. Clarendon Ave. Scottsdale, GA 30079. (404)294-5500.

Previous Events

Memorial Service

JUL 12. 1:00 PM (ET)

South DeKalb Chapel
4347 Flat Shoals Pkwy.
Decatur, GA 30034
(404) 241-5656
info@levettfuneralhome.com

Tribute Wall

BJ

“ Ben was my wonderful, intelligent and famous cousin. He was my hero. Although we lost contact, after he moved overseas, I will always cherish my time spent with Ben and the family because my older sister and I lived with the family for a short time. He came from a most wonderful, loving & generous family. Although I was a teenager, we had very interesting & intellectual conversations & debates. I never got the opportunity to let him know how much I admired him. I have googled him throughout the years to see if I could locate him. I didn't want to find him this way. I just want you to know that I love you, I miss you, cuz, & I know that you are in a better place.

Love, forever, forever,

Bobby Jean

Bobby Jean - March 01, 2021 at 10:26 PM

HL

“ J'ai eu le bonheur de jouer avec Ben de 1971 à 1975 dans l'équipe de basket de Joeuf , en N1 et N2 championnat de France , c'était à mon humble avis un des meilleurs joueurs U.S ayant évolué en France !! RIP mon cher Ben

Hervé Liebelt #6 JBL (Joeuf Basket Lorraine)

Hervé Liebelt - December 08, 2020 at 11:28 AM

BB

“ While Ben was coaching Mulkiye - Ankara Junior Team , 1989...



Bora Berengi - November 03, 2020 at 02:43 AM



“ 2 files added to the album Obituary



Gregory B. Levett & Sons Funeral Homes & Crematory, Inc. - July 21, 2020 at 11:20 PM

DE

“ Ben and I served in the Army together at Ft. Lewis, Washington in the mid sixties. His bunk was across the aisle from mine. I remember him as a big fan of Jazz, especially guitarist Wes Montgomery. I have made a few unsuccessful attempts to find him over the years. I'm sorry I didn't find him in time. My sincere condolences to his family.

Dick Elliott
Palmer Lake, Colorado

Dick Elliott - July 17, 2020 at 07:13 PM

JD

“ *Andy Piro, University of Iowa, Assistant Athletic Director and the University of Iowa Varsity Club sent a Varsity Club Letterman's Blanket to the family with the following message on Friday, July 10:*

Dear Family & Friends of Ben McGilmer –

The University of Iowa mourns the passing of a great person, alumnus, and letterman. Ben will be forever remembered by the Iowa Hawkeyes.

Please accept our deepest condolences and the enclosed Varsity Club Letterman's Blanket as a symbol of our appreciation, admiration, and respect.

God Bless Ben, his family, and his friends.

The UI Varsity Club

Janet Davis - July 14, 2020 at 03:31 PM

JD

“ *We nodded at Iowa 64-65. He processed me into the army, at Fort Lewis. We had a good conversation, when he saw I went to Iowa, and treated me well. That was 67. We waved at Iowa, 69-70. Never saw Ben again, but will always remember. My condolences to the family. Sincerely, John Donohoe*

John Donohoe - July 11, 2020 at 04:12 PM

BS

“ I first met Ben at Wigel Recreation Center on the Westside of Detroit. We were both tryin to develop our basketball skills I recall entering the gym and seeing a tall lanky kid playing with a lot of intensity and it was Ben.

Ben attended Northwestern High, and was mentored by the legendary Freddie Snowden. Coach Snowden was the first ever black head coach in the history of Division 1 college basketball at the University of Arizona.

In 1972 I was playing basketball in Antwerp, Belgium that is when Ben and I reconnected.

Ben was extremely loyal, caring, and unpretentious. He was unafraid of the unknown and had a zest for life which I always admired. Ben was a lifetime learner an truly a citizen of the world.

As you know Ben loved to talk, we spoke on May 29th about a wide range of topics such as the virus, political chaos, and race relations.

We often reflected on our Detroit backgrounds and being in the autumn of our respective lives. Little did I know it would be our last conversation. I regret that I didn't tell him how much he was loved.

Our conversation concluded with him talking about his favorite subjects, his loved ones Faye, Chris and beloved grand children.

Condolence to his family

Spider

Bill Griffin aka Spider - July 11, 2020 at 08:40 AM



“ *Rose Romanesque Bouquet was purchased for the family of Benjamin McGilmer, Jr.*



July 10, 2020 at 04:11 PM



“ *What a remarkable legacy Mr. McGilmer left behind. As a young person watching Hawkeye basketball I truly enjoyed the "team" that Ben was on. His accomplishments with the military and family are even more appreciated. Truly a remarkable Hawkeye ambassador. Thank you to the McGilmer family for sharing a portion of a truly wonderful person's journey through life. God bless your family and please cherish the memories.*

Charles Meeker - July 09, 2020 at 09:14 PM



“ *Faye,
I just came in from watering my garden and saw on my phone that I had an email from Janet. This email has brought me to tears. I never thought that the celebration of my 80th birthday would be the last time I saw Ben. I am in tears. I am so so so sorry. God bless you and give you strength. Stay strong. Love you.*

Mafori

mafori moore - June 30, 2020 at 08:58 PM

TB

“ Faye, we cannot begin to imagine what you are feeling, but please let us share our heartfelt condolences. May the God of the universe comfort and ease the pain of your grief. We are truly sorry for your loss; all that knew Ben would also miss him. Ben was a true friend to Bernice and myself. The times that we spent together socially were once in a life time occasions. He was a true jazz enthusiast and we enjoyed the meals and conversations at “First Friday Jazz sessions”, and other social gatherings. He was always available to help if needed. His friendship was full of kindness and caring. The only words we can say at this very moment are, Lord we thank you for the time you allowed us to share with him.

*You are in our prayers
Terry and Bernice Brantley*

Terry Brantley - June 27, 2020 at 09:47 AM

BT

“ Although we have known Ben for a short while it is obvious that he was an exceptional person. We are new to the area and Ben greeted us with a kind and hospitable spirit. We shared a love for jazz. He will be missed at the “First Friday” Jazz concerts, table #4. Ben’s legacy lives on in the devoted friendships and family he leaves behind. We are so grateful for the time we shared with you.

Peace, love and blessings,

Alfonzo and Brazilian Thurman

Brazilian Thurman - June 26, 2020 at 11:17 PM

JD

“ Iowa University releases article about Ben McGilmer: "Ben McGilmer of Iowa Six Pack Passes Away."

<https://hawkeyesports.com/news/2020/06/24/ben-mcgilmer-of-iowa-six-pack-passes-away/>

Janet Davis - June 25, 2020 at 02:51 AM

MC

“ Enjoyed watching Ben play his last two years at Iowa. He played with such intensity and ran the court so well. It sounds like his intensity and zest for life continued throughout his life. Please accept my condolences.

Mark Challis - June 24, 2020 at 01:42 PM

JD

“ 1 file added to the album McGilmer Memories



Janet Davis - June 24, 2020 at 12:09 PM

JB

“ Dear Faye and family, my prayers go out to you and yours at the loss of Ben. I pray you are comforted by sweet memories of all the things you enjoyed and shared in each other's lives.

Blessings joyce Bray and family.



Joyce W. Bray - June 23, 2020 at 11:53 PM

EF

“ *Our thoughts and prayers are with your family. In just a little while all of the pain and sorrow that we feel from the death of our love ones will cease and be replaced with joy, because the former things have passed away. Thinking of you all.*

Evans family - June 23, 2020 at 06:05 PM

JD

“ *3 files added to the album McGilmer Memories*



Janet Davis - June 22, 2020 at 03:01 AM

JD

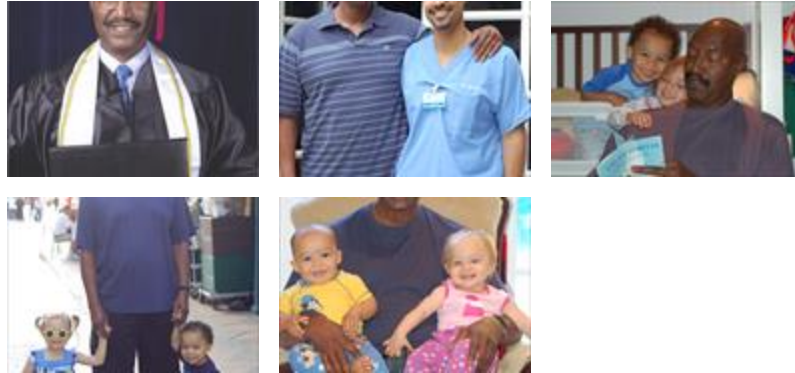
“ *29 files added to the album McGilmer Memories*



Janet Davis - June 22, 2020 at 01:36 AM

TY

“ 35 files added to the album *McGilmer Memories*



Tyrelle - June 21, 2020 at 03:18 PM



“ *I met Mr. McGilmer thru his good friend Mr. McGaffie. They were determined to help me get into the State Department. Mr. McGilmer loved to share his experiences in Turkey, talk about his afro and his brief military experience. I will miss him dearly. Until we meet again my friend.... Monica Ford-Little.*

Monica Little - June 18, 2020 at 12:50 PM