

TUSCALOOSA | Richard Lee Ellis, age 72, of Tuscaloosa, Ala., went home to meet his Lord and Savior on September 11, 2014. He was surrounded by his devoted wife Darlene and his loving family.

Services will be held Monday, September 15th at Circlewood Baptist Church, 2201 Loop Road, Tuscaloosa, AL .Visitation 10 a.m. to 12p.m., with the Service immediately following. Doctor Herb Thomas officiating. Pallbearers include Chet Boston, Lacon Carver, Hardy McCollum, Chris Mobley, Ray Perkins, Jerry Plott, Steve Shelton, Chuck Sittason, Mike Spiller, Bill Trick, Michael Warr and Rex Zeanah. Honorary pall bearers include Johnny Butler, Brian Hurd, Marlin Moore, Tommy Moore, Dr. James Saxon, Mike Shula, Dr. Ross Vaughn, Members of Old Palm Country Club, Members of Linville Ridge Country Club and Members of Indian Hills Country Club. Richard was preceded in death by his mother Irene Hale Ellis, his father Bert Carlyle Ellis, brother Bert Carlyle Ellis Jr., daughter Britni Leigh Wilhite, and grandchildren Elizabeth Grace Ellis and Richard Lee Ellis III.

Richard is survived by his wife Darlene, daughters Angela Thornton and Sherri Ellis, son Richard Ellis Jr. (Shelly), grandchildren Carlyle Thornton, Reilly Thornton, Mary Ellis Thornton, Austin Spraggins, Sarah Kyser Ellis, Reynolds Ellis, Isabella Ellis, sister Nancy Williams (Greg), parents-in-law Betty and Elmer Krebs, and his dedicated assistants Patrick Agee and Beth Glass, and his loving pet Belle.

Advantage Realty founder Richard Ellis was born in LaGrange, Georgia on May 11, 1942. His family moved to Pensacola FL where Richard was raised. As a young man, he moved to Athens TN to accept a position in the textile industry. For a short while he headed back to Pensacola for a stint as a deputy sheriff. His textiles career path took off again, though, leading him to Winnsboro SC, Gastonia NC, Cleveland OH, Spartanburg SC, and then to Tuscaloosa AL in 1970. When the Tuscaloosa plant was shut down in 1976, Richard found himself unemployed. When friend Wayne Smith suggested real estate, the always-optimistic young man decided to give it a try. With Wayne's nephew Danny, Richard formed Ellis-Smith Realty in 1976. This partnership would last two years, with Richard striking out on his own in 1978 to form Ellis Realty Inc. These were formative years for the young realtor, as he watched and learned and planned. When he joined friend Bill Trick in 1980 to form Ellis-Trick Inc., he put those plans in motion.

Developing properties in and around the thriving Tuscaloosa market was their goal, and the first venture was Indian Hills Office Park (the home base for Advantage Realty to this day) and it gained tenants in short order. The second development was the Tuscaloosa Galleria, built in 1981--when interest rates were 21%--also a success! Other developments followed in rapid succession: University Downs Condominiums, Inverness Apartment Homes, The Reserve at North River, Houndstooth Condominiums, The Bluff at Waterworks Landing, Regency Oaks Condominiums---and the first office condominiums developed in Tuscaloosa, the Heritage Building. He built the Woodland Forest subdivision, developing over 200 lots and building 40 homes.

He developed the lots for Traditions, Crimson Place and Midtown Village. He developed a large portion of 15th Street's business district, as well as the Skyland Center strip mall, and he owned and operated the City Shopping Center. He also developed hundreds of lots in Riverchase, Dogwood Trail and Old Mill Trace.

His influence also reached far past the city limits. His Interstate Properties Partnership developed the Exit 77 area just off of I-20/59 which has grown to include a Hampton Inn, McDonald's, Truck Stops of America, Tuscaloosa Chevrolet and several warehouses used by suppliers for Mercedes-Benz. He is a past President of the Tuscaloosa Board of Realtors and a member of the Industrial Development Authority.

These accomplishments in real estate developing were accompanied by very important accomplishments of a different sort.

Richard Ellis will always be remembered as a mentor, advisor, and tireless advocate for every person lucky enough to be his friend. No matter how busy he was, he always took the time to give encouragement and advice. Whether it was a shot in the arm that was needed, or a boot in the behind-Richard could, and did, deliver. Many businessmen are wiser, and many businesses stronger, because of Richard Ellis.

Richard was a born again Christian. He started or was a part of a Bible Study group in every community he lived in. Friends around the country can attest to the reawakening of their own faith simply because they were asked to join Richard in prayer.

A passionate golfer, Richard made lifelong friendships at Old Palm Golf Club in Palm Beach Gardens FL, Linville Ridge Golf Course in Linville NC, and at Indian Hills and NorthRiver Golf Courses in Tuscaloosa.

An avid Crimson Tide supporter, you could count on Richard to colorfully celebrate every victory and mourn every loss, as evidenced by the many stories that were told at Richard and Darlene's famous Gameday Omelet Breakfasts.

There are many tears in Tuscaloosa today, and in North Carolina, Florida, Georgia, and any of the many places where Richard and Darlene Ellis spent their time. The world is now a sadder place, and Heaven is a happier one. Richard Ellis, you will be missed.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations are appreciated, and may be made to:

Circlewood Baptist Church, 2201 Loop Road, Tuscaloosa, AL 35404

The Thomas Plott Foundation, P.O. Box 2649, Tuscaloosa AL 35403

Mt. Calvary Church, P.O. Box 125, Banner Elk NC 28604

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