

James Ernest "Ernie" Hayes, 91, of Linville Land Harbor, Newland, NC, passed away peacefully on June 17, 2014 following a brief period of declining health.

A genuine, caring individual, Ernie never met a stranger and loved his family and friends dearly. He cherished golf, a game he mastered and played for more than 70 years. He honed his skills to become a top amateur player during the peak of his playing days.

Ernie was born September 22, 1922 in Watauga County, North Carolina to the late Hobart Clayton Hayes and Agnes Hartley. He was preceded in death by his stepmother, Ruth Foster Hayes; brother, Albert "Abb" Hayes; and sister, Mary Frances Pfaff.

Raised in Blowing Rock, NC, Ernie spent his boyhood playing sports and was introduced to his love affair with golf when he began caddying at Blowing Rock Country Club at the age of 13. Ernie joined the US Navy in 1942 and served in World War II, becoming a sailor in the Pacific Fleet and seeing action in several conflicts, including the battle of Okinawa. Following the war, Ernie served his country again as an employee of the postal service, and as a District Park Ranger who patrolled the Blue Ridge Parkway for 17 years.

In the late 1960's, Ernie started working for the Carolina Caribbean Corporation on Beech Mountain. In 1969, he was chosen by CCC to lead a new project known then as Land Harbors of America. He wore many different hats on the development team as he led the construction of the community and the golf course; however, his primary responsibility was as the golf course superintendent. Ernie served in this capacity over 15 years until his retirement at the end of 1987. Ernie continued working, part-time, for over 20 years, serving as a consultant and then assisting the golf maintenance crews at Linville Land Harbor and Blue Ridge Country Club. He also worked as the golf course superintendent at the Hound Ears Club during 1975-76.

Ernie enjoyed the camaraderie of his professional associates and was a founding member of the Western North Carolina Turfgrass Association in the early 1970's. In 2008, the WNCTA named its scholarship endowment in honor of Ernie. He was a member of the Carolinas Golf

Course Superintendents Association for 40 years and received the Distinguished Service Award, its highest honor, in 2002. He also had 40 years of membership in the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, and enjoyed playing in its national, annual golf championship for many years. Ernie was also a member of the American Legion and Pineola Presbyterian Church.

Ernie is survived by a loving family: his dear wife of 46 years, Faye; three sons - Jim, of New Mexico; Michael, and wife, Michaelle Poore, of Jonas Ridge; Wally, and wife, Kim, of Newland; A daughter, Gail Anderson and husband Hal, of Boone; Grandchildren: Cheryl Dunn (Bobby) and Rev. Greg Anderson (Melanie) of Virginia; Jamie Howard of Durham; Mackenzie and Alexis Hayes of Jonas Ridge; and Annabelle, Ellie, and Parker Hayes of Newland; and four great-grandchildren - Callie & Cody Dunn, and Amelia & Abigail Anderson, all of Virginia.

Services will be held at Reins-Sturdivant funeral home in Newland, NC on Sunday, June 22nd, with the family receiving friends beginning at 2 pm and a memorial service at 4 pm in the chapel. In lieu of flowers, the family asks that memorials be made to the WNCTA, Ernie Hayes Scholarship Fund, c/o Craig DeJong, 7 Bevlyn Drive, Asheville, NC 28803. Reins-Sturdivant and Austin-Barnes Funeral Homes are assisting the family during this time.