



## Joe Elton Yates

August 15, 1938 - February 3, 2017

Joe Yates, 78, of Fayetteville, Arkansas went home on February 3. Joe was born on August 15, 1938 to parents Dovie and Elton Yates in the front bedroom of a house without electricity or running water on the Yates homestead in Cherokee City, Arkansas, on the west side of Benton County. He attended the one room school house at Cherokee City until he went to Gentry High School. He left high school at 17 to join the U.S. Air Force where he trained as a missile technician and served at US installations in England and Scotland. After his discharge he returned to Arkansas and earned his GED. He then earned his Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Geography at the University of Arkansas and completed most of his coursework for a PhD at the University of Oklahoma.

He taught college at the State College of Arkansas (now the University of Central Arkansas) in Conway before joining the Arkansas Department of Planning where he and a colleague published the award-winning Atlas of Arkansas, a comprehensive publication of vast amounts of data concerning demographics, economics, development, agriculture, infrastructure and other data. Recruited by then-governor David Pryor he became head of the Department of Building Services where he had responsibility for all state owned facilities. Later he returned to Benton County where he engaged in a number of business pursuits before being appointed to complete the unexpired term of county assessor. He then successfully ran for county tax

collector where he served for a number of years and mentored a generation of elected county officials. After serving as collector he ran for and won a seat in the Arkansas senate as one of only three Republicans in the 35 member body. While in the senate he also served as vice president of the Arkansas Poultry Federation, later serving as president of that group. During his time in the senate he served as chairman of a number of committees, including the powerful Joint Legislative Audit Committee. He was happy to have lived long enough to see the Republican Party win control of the Arkansas House and Senate.

Upon his retirement from the senate he joined the University of Arkansas as associate dean in the College of Agriculture where he managed the construction of the Center for Excellence in Poultry Science, widely acknowledged as the leading facility of its kind in the world. Following his retirement from the University he served as a Commissioner for the Arkansas Workers Compensation Commission.

Joe was one of a trio of former legislators who organized and directed the Huckabee administration when Governor Huckabee assumed office following the tumult of the last days of Governor Jim Guy Tucker's administration and he had many exciting stories of the days around that succession.

He loved to fish, hunt, garden, take pictures, chase birds, and barbeque. He was an accomplished woodworker and was preparing to take up leather craft. He restored and won many prizes with his Model A Ford. He built a canoe for his grandchildren. In the last few years he was a common sight in his neighborhood, riding his scooter out to get the mail, his newspaper and to visit his grandchildren. He and Judy spent a few winters in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas in their RV, cruised around, including a trip through the Panama Canal, and traveled the west with friends. He made it to the Hershey Auto Show and Swap Meet several times, covering every square inch of the swap

meet on his scooter. He was looking for a new cruise itinerary for a trip this spring.

He married the former Anita Ratcliff on August 28, 1960. He and Anita welcomed four children, including a set of twins, between 1962 and 1965. Anita preceded him in death in 2001. He married Judy Sugg Harrison, a classmate of his and Anita, in 2003. He was predeceased by a son, Patrick Shawn, a brother, Thomas Yates and a sister, Kathleen Fulton. He is survived by his wife, Judy, sons Christopher (Elizabeth), and Adam (Mindy) and daughter Robyn, two grandchildren, Linley Anita Yates and Hayden Christopher Yates, a sister Judy (Bill) Rife, three stepchildren, Tim, Bobby and Lori Harrison, and several cousins, nieces and nephews. He has a great many friends collected throughout his life since he rarely met anyone he didn't like. His family thanks his daughter Robyn for the care she provided in the last few months and expresses its love and gratitude to our stepmother Judy for the care and love she bestowed on him in their life together.

His was a remarkable life and he leaves a legacy in his family, the work he did and the lives he touched that is matched by few. While the last couple of years have been difficult, he still looked forward to new things and adventures but his home going is celebrated. He said many times that RIP was not rest in peace but Rejoicing in Paradise and that's what he is doing today, surrounded by family and friends in the eternal presence of his Savior.

Arrangements are by Wasson Funeral Service of Siloam Springs. The family will receive visitors from 12:30 p.m. to 1:15 p.m. with a 1:30 p.m. funeral service, on Wednesday, February 8, 2017, at Fellowship Bible Church, 1051 W Pleasant Grove Road in Rogers. A graveside service will follow at 4:00 p.m. at the Dickson Cemetery in Cherokee City.

In lieu of flowers the family requests donations be made to Arkansas

Children's Hospital. [www.giving.archchildrens.org](http://www.giving.archchildrens.org)

# Cemetery Details

## Dickson Cemetery

Dickson Cemetery  
Gentry, AR 72734

# Previous Events

## Visitation

FEB 8. 12:30 PM - 1:15 PM (CT)

Fellowship Bible Church  
1051 W. Pleasant Grove Road  
Rogers, AR 72756

## Service

FEB 8. 1:30 PM (CT)

Fellowship Bible Church  
1051 W. Pleasant Grove Road  
Rogers, AR 72756

## Graveside Service

FEB 8. 4:00 PM (CT)

Dickson Cemetery  
Dickson Cemetery  
Gentry, AR 72734



# Tribute Wall

CH

“ I grew up with Joe and have always considered him my good friend. Though I have had little contact with him since the late 1950's, he has often been in my mind and now there is an empty place in my world where he used to be.

*My sympathies to his family a friends.*

*Curt Hall*

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**Curtis D Hall** - February 08, 2017 at 08:34 PM



“ What a good man. I gave him a ride home from the State Senate on my first night as a newly sworn in Freshman. After having served on the DC Staff in the Senate I could not believe I was actually giving a Republican a ride home. He said Arkansas would be sunk the day we finally let the legislature be like Washington when it comes to parties (a prediction that has since come true btw). He was great company and a Statesman. We were on different sides of the aisle in some ways, but most of the time that barely mattered. He taught me a lot and he is one fellow state senator who I have continued to think about after being term limited years ago. We went on many duck hunts together. Arkansas owes you much my friend. I hope you finally complete that duck collection in heaven buddy -- the illusive Hooded Merganser! (he will get it) RIP buddy

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**Kevin Smith** - February 08, 2017 at 03:47 PM

JH

“ We were saddened to hear of the passing of Joe. May God comfort you during this time of need.

*Jimmy & Earlane Hendrix*

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**Jimmy Hendrix** - February 08, 2017 at 10:57 AM

JB

“ Joe, I remember the first time we meet, you heard me say my name was Ball and you said we must be related and this was at a political function in Fayetteville a few years ago . . . have wished many time that we had visited more & got to know more about our roots. Rest in peace my friend.

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**June B. Ball** - February 08, 2017 at 09:50 AM

H(

“ I was the principal architect for the Center of Excellence for Poultry Science and met with Joe often throughout the construction process. As noted in his obituary, The Center was -and is- a very significant project for the campus and for the industry. I always found Joe to be knowledgeable, fair, and with a good sense of humor. I know he will be missed by his family, friends and community. I am very glad that I had the pleasure of knowing him.

*H. Terry Rasco, FAIA (retired)  
Witsell, Evans & Rasco, Architects/Planners  
Little Rock, AR*

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**H. Terry Rasco, FAIA (retired)** - February 07, 2017 at 08:37 PM



“ *Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Joe Elton Yates.*



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February 07, 2017 at 04:29 PM



“ *Joe was a great friend to many; his leadership was thoughtful, determined and compassionate. He was proud of his family, spoke of them often with sincere affection and loved them dearly.*

*He was loyal, hard working and very well informed on the issues which his numerous committee assignments involved. His service and presence in the General Assembly was truly an asset to all the people of Arkansas.*

*My sincere condolences to his Family.*

*Philip Jones  
Jonesboro, Arkansas*

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**Philip Jones** - February 07, 2017 at 07:42 AM



“ *I knew Joe fir many years through the Arkansas Poultry Association. He was a very big part of getting things done. He was a friend. You never felt out of the group when Joe was there. He was a good man.*

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**Larry Hokt** - February 06, 2017 at 06:58 PM

LB

“ Hi Judy, Duane and I just want you and the family to know all of you are in our thoughts and prayers. We sure did enjoy him when he attended Brush Creek. God's comfort,  
Duane and Louetta

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**Louetta Baskin** - February 06, 2017 at 06:44 PM

RC

“ I went to school with Joe, he was a good friend. We will miss you Joe. Reva Jenks Chenoweth & my husband Johnny Chenoweth.

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**Reva Jenks Chenoweth** - February 06, 2017 at 02:25 PM

EH

“ Jim and I extend our deepest sympathy. A part of me has gone with Joe. Our parents were longtime friends. I attended that same school in the same class with Joe and we started school in Gentry together. In a beautiful way death brings us full circle. We do grieve with those closest to him who will miss him dearly! May Our Father God be your comfort!

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**Ellie Meeker Holcomb** - February 06, 2017 at 01:04 PM

VS

“ Joe and my husband, Ken were old time friends. Ken passed away in 2007. My condolences to his family. Best wishes to you all. Vickie Shields

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**Vickie Shields** - February 06, 2017 at 12:31 PM

WC

“ Wanda Coffee sent a virtual gift in memory of Joe Elton Yates



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**Wanda Coffee** - February 06, 2017 at 12:00 PM

LW

“ Mr. Yates was my geography teacher when I attended State Teachers College in the 70's. I am astounded but not surprised by his many accomplishments. He tried to teach us to be good citizens in addition to geography. What a legacy! Linda Bajorek Webb

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**Linda Webb** - February 06, 2017 at 09:30 AM

RM

“ I worked for Mr. Yates while he was a Commissioner at the Workers' Compensation Commission. He was a kind and caring person and I really enjoyed working for him. My deepest sympathies on your loss.  
Robin Mickel

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**Robin Mickel** - February 06, 2017 at 07:53 AM

MB

“ I never got to meet your dad, but you came from him so I know he was special. Thanks for always being an example of what it means to love and serve sacrificially. Love you MB

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**mb** - February 05, 2017 at 09:42 PM

JW

“ Remember back in the sixties staying at Joe and Anita's house many times with Judy. Loved that family.

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**Jan Bryson Walker** - February 05, 2017 at 05:59 PM

JB

“ Judy and family

*So sorry to hear of your loss. I will keep you in my thoughts and prayers.*

*Janie Brown*

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**Janie Brown** - February 05, 2017 at 05:56 PM

MF

“ Maxine Foster lit a candle in memory of Joe Elton Yates



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**Maxine Foster** - February 05, 2017 at 04:46 PM