



Julius Wesley Becton Jr.

June 29, 1926 - November 28, 2023

Lieutenant General (U.S. Army Retired) Julius Wesley Becton, Jr, a distinguished military leader and public servant, passed away peacefully at his home in Virginia on November 28, 2023, at the age of 97.

He was born on June 29, 1926, to Julius Wesley Becton, Sr and Rose Banks Becton in Bryn Mawr, PA . General Becton was a staunch supporter of education and learning. After graduating from Lower Merion High School, he went on to become the first black student enrolled at Muhlenberg College and subsequently earned degrees from Prairie View A&M College, and the University of Maryland. General Becton has also been awarded 6 honorary doctorate degrees.

His military education includes the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, the Armed Forces Staff College, and the National War College.

On January 29, 1948, he married the love of his life, Louise Thornton. They were married for almost 71 years. Together they raised five children and went on to live a remarkable life and impact the lives of countless people around the globe.

Becton joined the army in 1944 and for almost 40 years he held a variety of leadership positions as he rose through the ranks from an enlisted man in a segregated army to becoming a three-star general. He served as the

Squadron Commander of the 2nd Squadron, 17th Cavalry Regiment; the Brigade Commander, 2nd (St. Lo) Brigade, 2nd Armored Division; the Commanding General, 1st Cavalry Division; the Commanding General of U.S. Army Operational Test and Evaluation Agency; and as the Commanding General, VII Corps – the Army's largest combat corps in Europe during the Cold War. Becton is also a veteran of three wars, WWII, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War. Among his decorations are the Distinguished Service Medal, two Silver Stars, two Legion of Merit medals and two Purple Hearts, along with the Knight Commander's Cross of the Order of Merit of Germany.

Becton retired from the US Army in 1983 and continued his service to the nation in various civilian roles. From 1984-1985 he was the Director of the U.S. Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance in the United States Agency for International Development. In 1985 he was appointed by President Ronald Reagan to be the Director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency where he served until 1989.

After leaving FEMA, Becton embarked on a new career as an education administrator. In 1989 he was inaugurated as the first Alumnus to become the President of Prairie View A&M University and in 1996 he became the Superintendent/CEO of the Washington, DC public school system.

To some, General Becton will be remembered as a true American hero, a trailblazer, and a visionary leader. His family and friends will remember him as a man who loved God, who loved them dearly, and who inspired others to do their best in the service of others. His legacy will continue to inspire generations to come.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Julius and Rose Becton, his wife, Louise, his brother, Joe and his sister, Barbara. He is survived by his 5 children: Shirley McKenzie (Tim), Karen Becton-Johnson, Joyce Best (Art),

Renee Strickland (Frank), and Julius Wesley Becton III (Ingrid); his eleven grandchildren: Rena, Robin, Kim, Chris, Jocelyn, Stephen, Amber, Michelle, Emily, Wesley and Sam; eight great-grandchildren, devoted caregivers: Nana, Gina, Adwoa, Emelia, William and Derek, a host of nieces, nephews, cousins and sister-in-law, who grieve his loss and rejoice because of the life he led and the example he set.

A memorial service was held at 10 am on December 22, 2023, at the Main Post Chapel at, Ft. Belvoir, VA. The service was livestreamed at <https://www.facebook.com/FortBelvoirRSO?mibextid=LQQJ4d>.

The funeral service will be held at The Old Post Chapel, Ft. Myer, VA on Monday, June 10, 2024 at 11 AM. Internment directly following in Arlington National Cemetery.

The service at Arlington will be livestreamed. Please view here at the Live Web Streaming Link: <https://my.anc.media/3xLxtrJ>

In lieu of flowers, please consider donating to Prairie View A & M University, School of Nursing or The ROCKS, Inc Becton Scholarship. [https://giving.pvamu.edu/s/1880/bp19/interior.aspx?sid=1880&pgid=831&gid=2&cid=2003&ecid=2003&post_id=0] or The ROCKS, Inc. [https://www.rocksync.org/content.aspx?page_id=305&club_id=459944&item_id=11394].

Cemetery Details

Arlington National Cemetery

1 Memorial Drive
Arlington, VA 22211

Previous Events

Memorial Service

DEC **22**. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (ET)

Fort Belvoir Main Chapel
5950 12th St
Fort Belvoir, VA 22060

Funeral Service

JUN **10**. 11:00 AM - 11:30 AM (ET)

Fort Myer Old Post Chapel
204 Lee Ave
Fort Myer, VA 22211

Tribute Wall



“ *Jefferson Funeral Chapel created a Tribute Video in memory of Julius Wesley Becton Jr.*



Jefferson Funeral Chapel - December 14, 2023 at 04:00 PM

MZ

“ *i miss him*

mya zori - February 20 at 10:24 AM

PB

“ *I was friends with Renee when her parents were stationed at Ft. Hood. I spent many hours hanging out at her house. He chauffeured us around Killeen until Renee got her license. Even though I knew how important her dad was, to me he just Renee's dad, a really nice man who just happened to be a General. My belated condolences to your family.*

Pamela Taggart Benskin

Pamela Taggart Benskin - September 23, 2024 at 08:45 AM

HT

I remember meeting LTG Becton in 1975 when I was a PFC that had won soldier of the day. This was when you spent the day with the General and the Command Sergeant Major. That was a day that I will always cherish.

He was a bigger than life figure, but his concern for me was the reason I achieved the rank of CSM. Thanks to one of the greatest Generals I had the honor to serve under.

CSM Hayward Thompson (Ret)

Blessings 🙏🙏🙏

Hayward Thompson - December 11, 2024 at 12:10 PM

RR

As a PFC in 2nd Armored division 1974-1977, I was proud of him and MG Dilliard

Richard Young, 1SG Retired - February 21, 2025 at 10:25 PM

DF

“ I was Lt. Gen. JWB driver and aid in Vietnam Dec. 67 to June 68. A soldiers soldier. A good man. And now a leader for God's legions of angels. RIP Sir!

Doral F. Frost - July 20, 2024 at 07:47 PM

TW

“ I am the daughter in law of the late LTG Calvin A.H. Waller, who attended Prairie View A&M with Julius. It was on the occasion of his death that I met Julius and Louise, who graciously opened their home to my mother in law Marion and my now late husband, Mark Waller, who was the youngest son of Cal and Marion Waller, all 3 who have passed away. Julius and Louise were so kind and generous and thoughtful and gracious and caring. During our sadness, Julius offered scripture and wisdom as we grieved our loss. We stayed in touch as time would permit. Soon we relocated to the Northern Virginia area, where we were able to expand on our relationship while they lived in Springfield. I was sad to hear of his passing and look forward to sharing my condolences with the family at the service in June.

Traci Waller - March 19, 2024 at 07:08 AM

CN

For Honor and Heart I submit to my condolences to the Bectom family and friends! God's grace and mercy LTG Julius Bectom... Leader, Soldier, Loving Husband and Father.

CPT Carl Nichols - July 02, 2024 at 04:42 PM

MF

“ Mary Fergusob lit a candle in memory of Julius Wesley Becton Jr.



Mary Fergusob - December 22, 2023 at 10:02 AM

MA

Mary Ferguson
Praying continually for comfort for Joyce and family 🙏🙏

Mary Ferguson and Gwendolyn Allen - December 22, 2023 at 10:15 AM

GA

“ Gwendolyn Allen lit a candle in memory of Julius Wesley Becton Jr.



Gwendolyn Allen - December 22, 2023 at 09:59 AM

MA

Our prayers are with the family 🙏🙏🙏❤️

Mary Ferguson and Gwendolyn Allen - December 22, 2023 at 10:11 AM

BA

“ Gen Becton was the first African American GO I ever met. When he introduced himself as “Becton,” you got the impression immediately that “this guy knows who he is and where he’s headed!” He spent much of his time helping other Army officers get their own sense of direction. He took me on as a protégé early in my career. He liked me because I was always good for a spirited dialogue and discussion! I learned so much about how to be when relating to other humans. Gen Becton was a genuine human being who was determined to leave the world better than he found it. Rest in eternal peace, Old Soldier and My De

BG, ret. Clara L. Adams-Ender - December 22, 2023 at 05:09 AM

BR

ar Friend.

BG Clara L. Adams-Ender, US Army, ret. - December 22, 2023 at 05:14 AM

RT

General Becton came to then (Ft Bragg) now Ft Liberty, NC and served as the Guest Speaker for the Tau Gamma Gamma Chapter, Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., first Achievement Week Program as we honored the All-Black Paratroopers of the 555th Parachute Infantry Battalion on November 17, 1988. We as young African American Officers (mainly Captains and below) were thrilled to have someone of his stature to challenge and encourage us to do our absolute best no matter what.

Thank you General Becton for your service to God, country and humanity. May God rest your soul.

LTC Reginald Thomas, (Retired), US Army, Retired

Reginald Thomas - May 08, 2024 at 04:40 PM

LP

“*I had the great privilege of serving then Brigadier General Becton in his first GO assignment as the DCG of the Training Center and Fort Dix, New Jersey. I started what became a life-long friendship and, very significantly, a mentorship that I cherished because it started 20 months after my own father passed away (he was 54, I was 22). He absolutely filled that huge void in my life as my "surrogate-father". My wife Rita and I loved him and Louise immensely, and we will continue to cherish our friendship with "The Becton Kids" (Joyce, Renee and Wes). General B...*

*"Your Life was a Blessing
Your Memory a Treasure
You are Loved Beyond Words
And Missed beyond Measure"*

LTC (USA, ret) E. Gary Pasierb - December 17, 2023 at 05:30 PM

CW

“ I served under his Command when I was stationed in West Germany when he was Corp commander I was with 1s AD Bamberg 3rd Bde.



Clinton Warren - December 13, 2023 at 02:19 PM



“ It was an honor and a pleasure to have served under him when he was the commander at FT DIX NJ back in the 70s. Always made me feel PROUD.

Herbert Dorsey - December 13, 2023 at 09:25 AM

MA

“ I am grateful to have had the honor to have had conversations with him and his encouragement and kudos about my work with The ROCKS, Inc. always made me feel proud.

Ms. Alexis - December 11, 2023 at 04:30 PM

FT

“ RIP Julius.



Frank Titus - December 10, 2023 at 08:20 PM

WC

“ *Condolences and best wishes to the Becton family on the passing of a great citizen and soldier. Highest Regards, W. Justin Comstock, USN (Ret.)*

William Justin Comstock - December 10, 2023 at 10:38 AM

LW

“ *There’s so much, I don’t know where to start. I met the General when he first became President of PVAMU. He graciously accepted me and allowed me to have many conversations with him in his office. I thank him for Officially inviting me to his Inauguration with his friend General Colin Powell as his speaker. The many personal conversations about PVAMU and its Functionality. He did so much for he and his wife’s University, PVAMU. General Becton really saved PV because it was on a down spiral. He loved his Alma Maters and worked tirelessly to make it Better. It would take me more than a little time to say how much he meant to me and my son who was a student at the time. Thank you General Becton for allowing me to be your friend and Ear. My Deepest Condolences to your Family... Doug White*

L Douglas White - December 08, 2023 at 11:31 PM

JM

I had the pleasure to meet BG Becton in 1972 in Fort Dix New Jersey. In 1975 he asked me to serve in his personal staff at the 1st Calvary Division, Fort Hood. From that time forward, he became my mentor, a relationship that I will never forget. The Becton’s became my family and still are...never forget...My deepest condolences...R.I.P. Sr. John Miranda, SGM (RT)

John Miranda - July 18, 2024 at 10:28 PM

CR

“ I was one of his Aides while he was commanding the First Cav Div. I learned so from him. One of the best job I had in the Army. I also commanded A Co 2/7th Cav doing that time.

COL James E Kirkwood, US Army retired - December 08, 2023 at 09:15 AM

IR

“ I met General Becton when I was a Captain in the Army assigned to the First Cavalry Division in 1975. He recommended and endorsed my application for Regular Army Officer status. I became a cavalry troop commander while he commanded the 1st Cav.. He was a great soldier and a caring leader. A “ soldier’s soldier”. May God grant him eternal peace and rest!

Israel Anderson US Army LTC Retired - December 08, 2023 at 08:33 AM