



Alton Lee Darby

August 6, 1946 - December 3, 2025

Alton Lee Darby passed away on December 3, 2025, after a fourteen month battle with cholangiocarcinoma, at the farm near Leslie, Georgia, one of Alton's favorite places in this world. Alton was surrounded there by his loving wife, Cathy, family and loved ones.

Born on August 6, 1946, in Eufaula, Alabama, Alton was raised in "metropolitan Edison", Georgia, as Alton was fond of describing his hometown of 1,200; Alton was the only son of David Olin Darby and Ileana Ellis Darby. Olin and Ileana adored and doted on Alton; he was an only child through and through.

Alton is survived by his loving wife, Mary Catherine Darby; his daughters, Aimee Darby Sparks (Norwood Kerr), Jessica Dreamer (Christian), Lindsey Cotton Walker (Keith), and Christa Cotton (Brian Bitner); his sons, Maxwell Darby (Danielle) and Charles Ellis Darby; his grandchildren, Zoe Sparks (Nihal Bambulkar), Alexa Sparks, Dallas Woods (Emily), Stone Woods, Mia Woods, Flora Darby Bitner, and Waverly Walker; and great grandchildren Archer Woods and Maddie Woods.

Alton was predeceased by his father, David Olin Darby, and his mother, Ileana Ellis Darby.

Alton was a beloved husband, father, son, nephew, cousin, uncle, friend, and business partner. He touched the lives of many with his unforgettable storytelling, quick sense of humor, genuine warmth, and his knack for making everyone feel like an old friend. He could strike up a conversation with anyone, anywhere. His mind was always turning, his business instincts were keen, his wit was sharp, and his heart was generous and empathetic. No matter the circumstance, Alton had an extraordinary ability to remain optimistic and opportunistic under the most difficult of circumstances.

Alton graduated from the University of Georgia in 1969 and was a life-long supporter of UGA's Terry College of Business. He believed in education and founded the Darby Family/Victory Scholarship fund at UGA for students from rural Georgia which focused on students who were the first of their family to attend college.

After a brief career in commercial banking with C&S Bank, Alton used his business skills, entrepreneurial nature and financial acumen to pursue commercial real estate development and investments, as well as, other businesses including the founding of Victory Real Estate Investments, Thirteenth Colony Distilleries, and Victory Leslie Ag, among others. Alton loved doing deals, working on financing, talking with lenders and others in the business community. While not someone who embraced technology personally, the day Alton got his first cell phone changed his life. Alton answered his phone wherever he was and whatever day of the week or time of day it was.

Alton was not just an only child; he was one of a kind. His energy and engagement in all he did were extraordinary. From his earliest days, Alton was energetic and active, living a rich and varied life. Alton's interests spanned a broad spectrum from rock and roll music to politics to real estate to history and to economics. Alton loved to run financial proformas on yellow pads – running

numbers over and over again; each time tearing up his last set of numbers into small pieces and then, pen in hand, he began running the numbers on the same deal again filling another yellow pad sheet. Alton knew each business deal inside and out; he was always prepared.

Alton was a consummate storyteller; he often started a conversation with “can I tell you a story”. He seamlessly weaved stories and personal details into every conversation, presentation or call. He cared deeply about people and ended most conversations with the expression “what can I do for you?” thereby letting everyone know they were important to him.

On the personal front, Alton had a fear of flying; he drove everywhere he went including the many annual trip to the International Council of Shopping Center’s convention in Las Vegas. Numerous funny, occasionally sad and many unusual stories came out of the many long drives and driving vacations, Cruising was also an acceptable alternative to flying for Alton; one year, instead of flying for a Baltic Sea cruise vacation, Alton and Cathy took a cruise ship from Boston to Greenland, Iceland and ultimately England, where they boarded the Baltic Cruise. After the Baltic Cruise, they boarded a cruise ship reversing the earlier trip and cruised from England back to Boston. Of course, they drove to and from Boston (no flying allowed).

Alton not only enjoyed spending time at the farm in Leslie, he and Cathy enjoyed spending time at their beach home in Santa Rosa Beach, Florida and for many years at their home in Lee County, Georgia.

In September of 2024, Alton was diagnosed with cholangiocarcinoma. Alton spent many of the subsequent months at MD Anderson in Houston where he received world-class care and treatments. In the end, the cancer and complications of the cancer won. But throughout, Alton was optimistic and he

fought the good fight to the end.

For over 30 years, Alton was a member of Covenant Presbyterian Church in Albany, Georgia. He was grateful for the grace and love of God.

To his many friends and loved ones, Alton would say, "I have just one more thing to say, I had an amazing life" and then sing a few words from the Frank Sinatra hit, "I Did It My Way".

In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations be made to any of the three following charities:

1. MD Anderson - Robert A Wolff Education Endowment

Web Based Payment:

- www.MDAnderson.org/gift
- Check: "I'd like to choose where my donation will go."
- Mark: Other
- Type in: Dr. Robert A Wolff Education Endowment

Payment by Mail:

Mail to: MD Anderson Cancer Center
c/o Maria Gelormini
P.O. Box 4486,
Houston, TX 77210-4486

- Checks should be made payable to MD Anderson
- Note that your gift is for the Robert A Wolff Education Endowment

2. University of Georgia - Darby Family/ Victory Real Estate Scholarship Fund

Online Contributions can be made via the following link:

- Darby Family/Victory Real Estate Scholarship Fund (<https://gail.uga.edu/commit?des=75242003>)

3. Covenant Presbyterian Church – in memory of Alton L. Darby

Payment by Mail:

Mail Checks to: Covenant Presbyterian Church
2126 E Edgewater Dr,
Albany, GA 31707

Online:

- Covenant Presbyterian Church (<http://www.thechurchbythelake.com/>)
- Online Giving
- Secured Giving Portal
- Memorials

Cemetery Details

Private Burial

Previous Events

Visitation

DEC 8. 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM (ET)

Kimbrell-Stern Funeral Directors
1503 Dawson Rd.
Albany, GA 31707

Funeral Service

DEC 9. 11:00 AM (ET)

Covenant Presbyterian Church
2216 W. Edgewater Dr.
Albany, GA 31707

Tribute Wall

CJ

“ Alton and I were cousins. His father Olin was my mother’s 1st cousin. Alton & I played together as kids. Olin & Ilene were dear to us. I lost track of Alton when his folks died. They used to tell us about his adventures in Albany. They were very proud of him. I’m so sorry about your family’s loss with his death. My name is Carol Elliott Johnson, great niece of Gome & Estell Johnson in Carnegie. My mother Nancy owned a small farm outside Edison. Alton was 1 month older than me & we were in elementary school together for a couple of years. I know God is watching over you & will always be there. I will pray for you & the family. So glad to see so many children & grands. They are truly a blessing. May God bless & keep you. Carol Johnson (babsdust1@gmail.com) I don’t know how much Alton spoke of cousins or how much he remembered.

Carol Johnson - January 12 at 02:18 PM

AS

“ My prayers go out to all of Alton's sweet friends and family. This obituary captures his giving, joyful, sparkly spirit and his deep commitment to all in which he was involved. What a truly good man. With blessings

ANN BRIM STREAT - December 17, 2025 at 07:19 PM

PJ

“ We will all miss Alton's wit and upbeat personality!
Price LeBlanc, Jr.

Price LeBlanc, Jr. - December 11, 2025 at 09:06 PM

RT

“ *Cathy, I am so very sorry to hear of your loss. May God hold you and your family tight and send you peace.*

Robin Toms - December 11, 2025 at 08:37 AM

LS

“ *Praying for the family - I feel a kinship since we both named our sons Max - what a great legacy he left, and we are privileged to contribute to the scholarship fund he set up.*

Lamarr Stevens - December 09, 2025 at 10:21 AM

BH

“ *My thoughts and prayers are with you all. Mrs Cathy I just wanted to reach out and send my love to you. He was a great man and always an encouraging voice. He will be missed by many and his community but nothing like you and his family. God be with you in the days ahead.*

Bo Henry - December 09, 2025 at 08:35 AM

WL

“ *Cathy,
I am so sorry for your loss.
Bill Liston*

william liston - December 08, 2025 at 03:10 PM



“ *Fairest of All was purchased for the family of Alton Lee Darby.*



December 08, 2025 at 11:27 AM

PC

“ Patrick Golden and Chan Chavers planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Alton Lee Darby.

Patrick Golden and Chan Chavers - December 08, 2025 at 11:27 AM

CJ

“ Claire J. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Alton Lee Darby.

Claire J. - December 08, 2025 at 11:01 AM

YC

“ Your friends at Robinson, Grimes & Co purchased the Country Basket Blooms for the family of Alton Lee Darby.



Your friends at Robinson, Grimes & Co - December 08, 2025 at 10:54 AM

YC

“ Your friends at Robinson, Grimes & Co planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Alton Lee Darby.

Your friends at Robinson, Grimes & Co - December 08, 2025 at 10:54 AM

LH

“ Love, Paul and Debbie Holland purchased the Enchanted Cottage for the family of Alton Lee Darby.



Love, Paul and Debbie Holland - December 07, 2025 at 10:39 PM



“ Heavenly Grace Spray was purchased for the family of Alton Lee Darby.



December 07, 2025 at 08:40 PM

VI

“ Victory Real Estate Investments planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Alton Lee Darby.

Victory Real Estate Investments - December 07, 2025 at 08:40 PM

TF

“ The Stevens Family purchased the Emerald Garden Basket for the family of Alton Lee Darby.



The Stevens Family - December 07, 2025 at 03:31 PM

TB

“ *The Brame's(Michael, Sherrie, Regan) purchased the Sentiments of Serenity Spray for the family of Alton Lee Darby.*



The Brame's(Michael, Sherrie, Regan) - December 07, 2025 at 01:29 PM

TB

“ *The Brame's(Michael, Sherrie, Regan) planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Alton Lee Darby.*

The Brame's(Michael, Sherrie, Regan) - December 07, 2025 at 01:29 PM

SW

“ *A very special person to know!. He brought happiness to everyone he met. A huge loss for all of us. Sending love, hugs and prayers to his wonderful family who he adored.*

Susan Wiley - December 07, 2025 at 09:34 AM

LR

“ *Lauren RN purchased the Be My Love Bouquet with Red Roses for the family of Alton Lee Darby.*



Lauren RN - December 06, 2025 at 07:42 PM

LR

“ Lauren RN planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Alton Lee Darby.

Lauren RN - December 06, 2025 at 07:42 PM

BM

“ Barrett, Tim, Dale, Dawn, Yancy, Matt purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of Alton Lee Darby.



Barrett, Tim, Dale, Dawn, Yancy, Matt - December 06, 2025 at 04:14 PM

BM

“ Barrett, Tim, Dale, Dawn, Yancy, Matt planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Alton Lee Darby.

Barrett, Tim, Dale, Dawn, Yancy, Matt - December 06, 2025 at 04:14 PM

TG

“ Tim, Samuel and Reece Guillory purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Alton Lee Darby.



Tim, Samuel and Reece Guillory - December 06, 2025 at 04:09 PM

TG

“ Tim, Samuel and Reece Guillory planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Alton Lee Darby.

Tim, Samuel and Reece Guillory - December 06, 2025 at 04:09 PM

TD

“ I had the privilege of working at VREI for Alton for more than six and a half years. Some of my most formative moments in commercial real estate came from long drives with him and Kent, listening, learning, and feeling as if I were sitting with giants of the industry. They even took me quail hunting several times—those memories still mean a lot to me.

Alton would call me to talk through deals, and every time I walked away reminded of how sharp he was. He always had a new angle, a creative perspective, and yet he led with collaboration—bouncing ideas off leadership and building consensus. That balance of brilliance and humility is rare.

Just a couple of weeks ago, I was telling a friend one of my favorite Alton stories. His favorite grocer wanted him to invest in a major remodel of a store hoping it would boost sales. The numbers didn't make sense for Victory to take on that kind of expense, so Alton came up with a far more affordable and creative idea: Victory would buy a new car, park it in front of the store with a big bow and a sign that read “Shop Here, Win This Car!” He took that idea straight to the corporation's headquarters and pitched it. They never did it—but they should have. It was brilliant, bold, and pure Alton.

His lessons, always wrapped in stories and delivered with that mix of wisdom, creativity, and humor will echo in my memories for the rest of my life. I'll miss him—and I know so many others feel the same.

Tyler Divin - December 06, 2025 at 01:58 PM

PS

“ Phillip Shumny purchased the Strength & Solace Spray for the family of Alton Lee Darby.



Phillip Shumny - December 06, 2025 at 01:41 PM

TM

“ Love and prayers to Cathy and all their family so sorry for your loss. Always enjoyed Alton and his stories, great memories . Thinking of all of you. ❤️🙏
😭

Teresa Maloof - December 06, 2025 at 10:38 AM

VB

“ Sincere condolences, Cathy. George and I are keeping you and your family in our thoughts and prayers.

Valerie Buchanan - December 05, 2025 at 10:39 PM

LG

“ Dear Cathy, I'm so sorry for your loss.
Lisa Garcia

lisa garcia - December 05, 2025 at 08:44 PM

MF

“ Monty Veazey & Family purchased the Magnificent Life Spray for the family of Alton Lee Darby.



Monty Veazey & Family - December 05, 2025 at 02:36 PM

MF

“ Monty Veazey & Family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Alton Darby.

Monty Veazey & Family - December 05, 2025 at 02:36 PM

RC

“ Ronnie and Joanna Culbreth purchased the Magnificent Life Spray for the family of Alton Lee Darby.



Ronnie and Joanna Culbreth - December 05, 2025 at 02:20 PM

RC

“ Ronnie and Joanna Culbreth planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Alton Darby.

Ronnie and Joanna Culbreth - December 05, 2025 at 02:20 PM

JL

“ Josh L. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Alton Darby.

Josh L. - December 05, 2025 at 11:52 AM

EB

“ *Employees of The Citizens Bank purchased the Sentiments of Serenity Spray for the family of Alton Lee Darby.*



Employees of The Citizens Bank - December 05, 2025 at 11:41 AM

EB

“ *Employees of The Citizens Bank planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Alton Darby.*

Employees of The Citizens Bank - December 05, 2025 at 11:41 AM



“ *Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Alton Lee Darby.*



December 05, 2025 at 09:09 AM