



## John Pickens Gardner Jr

November 22, 2020

John P. Gardner, Jr.

On November 22, 2020, John P. Gardner, Jr. was welcomed into the arms of his Heavenly Father after a three year battle with cancer. For any who knew him, this was the realization of a life-long communion with God here on earth and we are certain he arrived in peace, joy, and celebration.

John was born of the late Honorable John “Jack” P. Gardner, Sr. and Lucilee Arthur Gardner in Florence, South Carolina on August 30, 1952. He attended Wofford College as a legacy member of the Sigma Nu Fraternity and then completed Law School at the University of South Carolina. Following graduation, he was the youngest member at that time ever elected to the South Carolina House of Representatives, and one of only four son and father pairs to both serve as Representatives. After successfully instating the South Carolina Court of Appeals, he joined his father as the third generation Gardner to lead the Gardner Law Firm. John grew his law practice into one of the largest regional firms in South Carolina with six locations across the state and that practice was recognized for having the Most Dignified Marketing Campaign in the Country by the American Bar Association.

He continued to serve his life-long home state as Commissioner for the Department of Highways and Public Transportation and Chairman of the Highway Patrol Committee. Seeing his fellow Darlingtonian’s walking on the sidewalk that connects the Darlington Country Club with downtown would always bring a smile to his face; it was one of his projects he spoke about

most often.

John found his purpose in providing the path and the means for everyone to realize their own potential. He began this work in his early career and expanded it through a daily television segment that ran for more than five years called Designing a Life That Works. He authored four books: Chicken Soup for the Entrepreneurial Soul; Living at the Summit; If You Are Me, Then Who Am I?; and Bound in the Bible. In the late 90's, he joined The People's Network to further his personal development and from that grew a career with LegalShield, dedicating the next twenty-plus years to enabling equal access to justice for every person.

John had the opportunity to engage with many thousands of people throughout his life, and each one of them became a part of his story. He was convicted by your individual journeys, and worked tirelessly every day in pursuit creating a better world through his work. His signature assertion, "You're not thinking big enough" became a moniker to inspire anyone he spoke with to believe in themselves and their future beyond any limit. At the height of his speaking career, it was a chant that rang through crowds around the country. More recently, you could spot him around town by his license plate TNKBIGR, a wink toward that very phrase.

He is survived by his beloved wife of almost thirty years, Elizabeth Dickerson Gardner, as well as his son: Bryant P. (Mary Beth) Gardner, his granddaughter: E. Camille Gardner, his daughter: E. Peden (Quinton) Gray, his son: E. Burch "Burt" Hughes, his son: D. Wade (Jessica) Hughes, his grandchildren: Emma L. and Thomas W. Hughes, as well as countless friends who became family across his life. He is preceded in death by his parents, his sister: Harriett Gardner Watson, and his son: Younger John Huntington Gardner.

We remember John for his laugh, though he was truly defined by his boundless belief in others, a conviction born out of his life and his faith. It was that belief that drove him to defend the people he represented as an attorney, to continue in pursuit of equal justice for all in his twenty plus years with

LegalShield, and that provided the fuel for his constant dedication to supporting others. He was a Gideon, recurrent participant in the Kairos Prison Ministry, and a leader of his Bible Study at St. Matthew's Church. Privately, though, you would find him in his favorite chair every morning pouring over the Word, writing notes in the margins of dozens of bibles to each of his family members. His truest legacy will live on through all of us inspired by the words bound in those bibles.

John's life reminds us of the kind of community you can cultivate through faith and service and we are grateful that we can carry forward his lasting example. Through Toys for Tots, medical ministry, prison ministry, thanksgiving baskets, Samaritan's Purse, his church, the Gideon's, notes to his friends, books for his life, mentoring, the lessons and legacy of his bibles, and so much more he quietly but steadfastly poured his heart and his influence into creating a greater good for all people. The ripple effect of his impact is truly immeasurable.

The family would ask that we celebrate his life together. The public service will be held on Thursday, December 3rd at 2:00 PM ET at First Baptist Church in Darlington, directed by Kistler-Hardee Funeral Home, and we welcome friends to join us following the service at the South of Pearl, 117 Edwards Ave, Darlington, SC. His greatest hope is that we would carry forward in service of each other and trust that he is free and resting in the everlasting life, joy, love, and learning of Our Father Almighty.

Every night, John spoke the following over his children while holding hands with Elizabeth and it only felt appropriate that we send you forward with his belief for all of you:

Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

3 He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

# Previous Events

## Celebration of Life

DEC 3. 2:00 PM (ET)

First Baptist Church  
216 S Main St  
Darlington, SC 29532  
(843) 393-2874

# Tribute Wall

WB

“ Elizabeth..I am so sorry to see here that your beloved husband passed away and I know you and your family are hurting but try to stay strong with the help of family and friends. I used to go to his parents house when I was little with my Mema. Lucilee made the best fudge. I will be praying for you...God Bless and Strength in Heart.  
Love Wyndee Hatchell Brown



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**Wyndee Hatchell Brown** - December 24, 2020 at 07:12 PM

AB

I am trying to reach Elizabeth Gardner please call me at 301-385-2706  
ashaki Braswell

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**Ashaki Braswell** - June 25, 2022 at 02:05 PM

PJ

“ John was an inspiration and an encouragement to many. It was a blessing to know him.  
Paul Jones  
Orlando, FL

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**Paul Jones** - December 07, 2020 at 12:56 AM

AT

“ He was a friend that I can't put in words. We had a relationship that went beyond LS. I remember the first time I met John he was sitting behind me at a conference in Dallas and was introduced to me. As I stated to Elizabeth, who knew that that introduction would turn into a lifetime friendship. What he did for me was beyond money as he would get in his vehicle and drive from Darlington to Greensboro just to train at my Certification class and would allow me to pay him a dime. My own firm sometimes would'nt do that.

To God be the glory for the great things he has done. Heaven had a party the other day and John is with the greater cloud of witnessed cheering us on.

My life has been made better because of my relationship with John Pickens Gardner

Hallelujah Somebody

Agar Thomas

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**Agar Thomas** - December 02, 2020 at 08:10 PM

CM

“ John touched sooooo many lives including mine. I'm grateful for the 23 years of knowing John...all the training, the special talks, his encouraging way, his affectionous optimism, and more! I'll continue to reflect on the memories and I hear him saying "The World is Conspiring To Do Me Good". Our dearest and most sincere condolences to Elizabeth, Peden, and the Gardner family. May God's Peace and Tranquility comfort you during this time.

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**Corey Muhammad** - December 02, 2020 at 11:37 AM



“ *Large Basket Garden was purchased for the family of John Pickens Gardner Jr.*



December 02, 2020 at 09:40 AM



“ *Serene Reflections Bouquet was purchased for the family of John Pickens Gardner Jr.*



December 02, 2020 at 09:37 AM



“ *Susan B Futrell lit a candle in memory of John Pickens Gardner Jr*



**Susan B Futrell** - December 01, 2020 at 10:08 PM



“ *Love from your Family in WI, MN, MI & IA purchased the Garden Accent Stone - "Wherever a Beautiful Soul..." for the family of John Pickens Gardner Jr.*



**Love from your Family in WI, MN, MI & IA** - December 01, 2020 at 03:42 PM

GN

“ *Gayle and Nick purchased the Sentiments of Serenity Spray for the family of John Pickens Gardner Jr.*



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**Gayle and Nick** - December 01, 2020 at 12:49 PM



“ *Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of John Pickens Gardner Jr.*



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November 30, 2020 at 10:20 PM



“ *Sacred Garden Spray was purchased for the family of John Pickens Gardner Jr.*



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November 30, 2020 at 06:19 PM

IJ

“ *Ida Jones purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of John Pickens Gardner Jr.*



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**Ida Jones** - November 30, 2020 at 03:27 PM

SM

“ Elizabeth, we are so blessed to have known John (mentor, friend, leader, man of wisdom)....Soooooo saddened by his passing... I will forever hear his words "You Aren't Thinking Big Enough" and "Plan Tomorrow Today"  
Keeping you and family in our prayers. Sarah and Pick Mitchell



Sarah Mitchell - November 30, 2020 at 11:11 AM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of John Pickens Gardner Jr.



November 28, 2020 at 07:37 PM

CK

“ Cathy Kemmerlin lit a candle in memory of John Pickens Gardner Jr



Cathy Kemmerlin - November 28, 2020 at 12:17 AM

PD

“ Patti & Davison-Smith purchased the Basket of Memories for the family of John Pickens Gardner Jr.



Patti & Davison-Smith - November 27, 2020 at 10:36 PM

RD

“ John and I spent numerous nights and hours playing table tennis upstairs in his home. The games were fiercely competitive. Each time I hear a ping pong ball 🏓 I am reminded of those memories. He pursued life as he played the game - to the fullest. R.I.P. May God continue to bless the Gardner family. His high school friend and tennis partner- Bob Davis

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**Robert (Bob) Davis** - November 27, 2020 at 09:16 PM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of John Pickens Gardner Jr.



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November 26, 2020 at 07:56 PM



“ Enchanted Cottage was purchased for the family of John Pickens Gardner Jr.



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November 26, 2020 at 11:20 AM



“ Elizabeth and family, my heart broke into a thousand pieces when I heard the news of John's passing. All of the things that surely made you fall in love with John so many years ago are the same qualities that made us all fall for him, too -- his genuine kindness, honesty, eagerness to be of service, his ability to make everyone in his presence feel heard and important, and his fascinating mind which was full of so much knowledge and wisdom. I know your family is heartbroken, and I'm so, so sorry. Sending you all prayers, love, strength and peace from Austin. 🙏 Love, Tara & Avery Paustenbach

Tara Paustenbach - November 25, 2020 at 06:55 PM

RW

Our thoughts and prayers are with the Gardner's family. May God's strength be with each of you during this time of sadness..Rep Williams

Rep Robert Williams - November 26, 2020 at 08:40 PM



“ Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of John Pickens Gardner Jr.



November 25, 2020 at 04:30 PM

PS

“ Paul Cannarella, Sr. lit a candle in memory of John Pickens Gardner Jr



Paul Cannarella, Sr. - November 25, 2020 at 03:00 PM



“ *Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of John Pickens Gardner Jr.*



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November 25, 2020 at 02:06 PM



“ *John was a gift to everyone who met him and got to hear him share his infinite wisdom. It was always lovely to see the love he had for his family and they for him. He will surely be missed by many. Rest well Mr. Gardner. Gone way, way, way too soon!*

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**Meredith Sloan** - November 25, 2020 at 02:03 PM



“ *Pam and I send our deep sympathy. I recall many of the significant accomplishments of his noteworthy career. Please know that you are in our thoughts and prayers. John L. Napier*

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**John L.Napier** - November 25, 2020 at 01:23 PM



“ *So sorry to hear of John's passing but so happy he is with His Father in Heaven. We went to school together and shared a locker side by side since our last names were Gardner. I was always frustrated by the locker combination lock and he was forever opening it for me. Such a kind fellow. I saw him years ago at Books A Million ,not long after his Chicken Soup book came out.We had not seen each other in years but he was the same kind fellow from school. My condolences for his family and those who knew him.*

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**Betty Gardner Simmons** - November 25, 2020 at 11:56 AM

PS

“ *Paula Griggs Stork lit a candle in memory of John Pickens Gardner Jr*



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**Paula Griggs Stork** - November 25, 2020 at 09:20 AM

 Christy Ridgill

“ *Elizabeth and family, I am so saddened to hear of John's passing. I can imagine him saying don't be sad for me! I will never forget him calling Dr. Booth's office and his greeting of " GOOD MORNING!!!!" when I answered the phone. He was always looking on the bright side of life and that laugh was so enormous. You are in my thoughts and prayers. Christy Ridgill*

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**Christy Ridgill** - November 25, 2020 at 09:08 AM

PT

“ *My sincere condolence*

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**Patty Tadlock** - November 25, 2020 at 05:02 AM

GO

“ *Grady O'Neal lit a candle in memory of John Pickens Gardner Jr*



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**Grady O'Neal** - November 24, 2020 at 11:07 PM

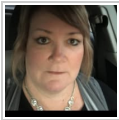
SU

“ So very sorry to hear of John passing. We were in high school together, good friends. He was a wonderful person. Thoughts and Prayers for the entire family.

*Susan Fleming Miller*

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**susan** - November 24, 2020 at 03:30 PM



*Flying high and thinking big enough !!!!!  
You will be missed !!  
Debbie Mosley*

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**Debbie Mosley** - November 25, 2020 at 09:10 PM

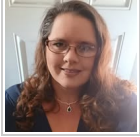
RH

“ I met John while he served on the Development Board many years ago. He was always a pleasant and kind person. He always treated me with much kindness and had a beautiful smile. Prayers for the family. Rest In Peace my friend. Heaven gained a great angel.

*Renee Odom Howle*

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**Renee Odom Howle** - November 24, 2020 at 11:35 AM



“ *Mr. John was a warrior. He fought the fight. He always told me no matter the outcome he was going to win the fight - whether on the earth or in heaven. His faith was unwavering. The last time I spoke to him was early October after he had been in the hospital. He always made sure to tell me he loved me and to keep praying. I have known Mr. John since 1996 when he represented my parents in a car accident. He was kind and compassionate. It was never about money with him. He wanted to do what was right for his clients regardless of the outcome. He always greeted us with a smile. We love y'all and are praying for y'all.*

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**Rebecca Kelly** - November 24, 2020 at 11:18 AM



“ *Donna Smothers lit a candle in memory of John Pickens Gardner Jr*



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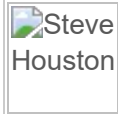
**Donna Smothers** - November 24, 2020 at 08:27 AM



“ *I loved John Gardner no man has ever inflicted and changed my life like John... We became close very early and years business and miles kept us from talking more than ones or so a year. I am overwhelmed with sadness we never caught up a few months ago when we had that chance ... John Gardner change lives , through his grace and his testimony , the people he touched were better as a result .. I for one have a huge hole in my heart .. Well Done Good and Faithful Servant... I hope to meet again someday .*

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**Steve Houston** - November 24, 2020 at 12:07 AM



*“affected”*

**Steve Houston** - November 24, 2020 at 12:09 AM

JH

*“ I am sure the Lord is saying "Well Done my Good and Faithful Servant" John I will miss you and the way you always cared more about those around you then you did about your own struggle. You are my example of a great man, a hero and a true friend. I love you. Elizabeth I am so sorry that you did not get more time together. I love you and will keep praying for you and your children for peace and strength.*

**John Hall** - November 23, 2020 at 10:00 PM

PB

*“ Pat And Moon Bazen lit a candle in memory of John Pickens Gardner Jr*



**pat and moon bazen** - November 23, 2020 at 07:00 PM

PB

*I am so sad to hear that I want be able to see John out walking but he was always so pleasant to talk to when we would see each other out walking. Elizabeth take care and hope to see you soon*

**pat and moon bazen** - November 23, 2020 at 07:02 PM

DT

“ Elizabeth, Bryant and Peden:

*John filled so many lives with laughter and touched those same lives with prayer, compassion and caring. He was a one of kind human-being showing strength even in the darkest of times. He seemed to flourish and his light grew brighter when challenges arose which might have caused others to falter and grow dim. Failure was never an option for John... God just needed John more in Heaven than we did here on Earth. John's eyes, heart, mind and soul were always fixed upon our Lord Jesus Christ and take comfort knowing that John Pickens Gardner, Jr. now walks and runs with our Blessed Savior and Redeemer. Our Love and Prayers are with you. Debbie and Rusty Turbeville*

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**Debra D. Turbeville** - November 23, 2020 at 06:14 PM

JB

“ So sorry to learn of John's passing. Please accept my deepest sympathy. My thoughts and prayers will be with you during this difficult time

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**J. Glenn Beckham** - November 23, 2020 at 02:45 PM

RH

“ We are so blessed to have known John. Keeping Elizabeth and family in our prayers. Rick and Janet from St Louis

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**Rick Hemphill** - November 23, 2020 at 02:06 PM