



Bobby F. McKown

September 7, 1936 - April 9, 2023

Bobby F. McKown, a champion and defender of the Florida Citrus Industry, died peacefully in Tallahassee, Florida on April 9, 2023. He was born on September 7, 1936, in Doerun, Georgia. Bobby is survived by his wife of 61 years, Yvette Dixon McKown, his daughter, Mia Loraine McKown and his favorite person in the world, his granddaughter, Ava Loraine McKown. He was preceded in death by his mother, Delma Belk McKown, his father, Harry Virgil McKown and his brother, Virgil McKown.

Bobby's family moved to Winter Haven, Florida, when he was in the third grade and he lived there most of his life. He graduated from Winter Haven High School in 1954 and then entered his beloved University of Florida where he graduated with honors with a degree in advertising and management. He joined the Winter Haven News Chief, where he held a variety of positions, including assistant retail advertising manager, classified advertising manager and circulation manager.

Bobby began his career in Florida agriculture in 1965 when he joined the Florida Cannery Association. In the mid-1970s he became the Executive Vice President of the Florida Agricultural Research Institute ("FARI"), the statewide trade association representing the fertilizer and agri-chemical industry. Bobby,

however, is best known for leading the 12,000-plus grower organization, Florida Citrus Mutual (“Mutual”), from 1980 through 1998. Throughout his career he wrestled with a number of significant problems affecting agriculture and citrus, including declining membership, freezes, canker, Mediterranean fruit fly, water issues, pesticides, growth management, and strong competition in the marketplace from Brazil. Bobby was known as the “voice of oranges” and was a highly respected trade negotiator. His expertise in trade distinguished him from all others and was truly his professional calling. Bobby was appointed by five presidential administrations to every trade committee, task force, and advisory position that mattered.

Bobby not only had a strong work ethic, he was possessed by it. Bobby attacked all issues with intensity, foresight, and a can-do attitude. His attention to detail and relentless, never-back-down determination served him well as he navigated the industry through some of the most difficult times in its history.

Bobby and Virgil, along with Dexter Daniels, started Daniels McKown Oil Company, which was a Gulf/BP Oil distributorship for Polk, Hardee, and Highland counties. He was also very involved in his local community and served on many civic boards. He believed in the value of education and understood from firsthand experience that education can change your life. He was extremely proud to have been appointed by Governor Bob Graham to serve on the Polk Community College Board and the State Governing Board for Community Colleges. He served on numerous civic and church boards, was a member of Florida Blue Key, Sigma Nu Fraternity Hall of Fame, Florida Citrus Hall of Fame and Florida Agriculture Hall of Fame. He was also a member of First Baptist Church in Tallahassee.

In the end, all that ever really mattered to Bobby was his family. He loved and had the utmost respect for his mother. She worked so hard to provide for Bobby and Virgil. She instilled in them that they were (and would always be) each other's best friend. Bobby lost his brother in 1989 when Virgil was only 48. It was an incredible blow, and Bobby missed him every single day.

Hands down the best thing that ever happened to Bobby was meeting Yvette Dixon, on a blind date in 1962. Bobby was smitten from the get-go and he did not waste any time. Within three months of their first date he asked Yvette to marry him, and they were married three months after that. They were married for almost 61 years and still held hands. Bobby understood and appreciated the fact that Yvette was his rock and biggest supporter. He often said there was no way he could have accomplished the things he did without her.

He was the ultimate cheerleader for his daughter, Mia. He was home for dinner, attended dance and piano recitals, proofread school projects, helped with every student government campaign, did not sugar coat losses, and, most importantly told Mia that there was not one thing she could not do if she put her mind to it. The joy of his life, however, was being Ava's grandfather. He instilled in Ava to always strive for excellence and an unwavering love for the Florida Gators.

Bobby was not perfect. He could be hard headed and unyielding, but he was a wonderful husband, father, grandfather and friend. When Bobby was nominated for the Florida Agriculture Hall of Fame, many shared letters of support for the nomination. In the end, his wonderful friend Jimmy Emerson summed it up best: "his uncompromising commitment to 'do the right thing

because it's the right thing to do' really tells you all you need to know about this man and why he has achieved great success in his life for his constituents, his family and his friends." That is truly who Bobby was and Jimmy's words were a phenomenal testament to this perfectly, imperfect great man.

A memorial service for Bobby McKown is scheduled on Friday, April 21, 2023, at 1:00 p.m. EDT at Bevis Funeral Home in Tallahassee, Florida. A graveside service in Winter Haven, Florida will follow at a later time. In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations be made to the Bobby F. McKown endowed fund at the University of Florida, which was established in his honor at his retirement.

Kelly Barber of Bevis Funeral Home (850-385-2193 or www.bevisfh.com) is assisting the McKown family with their arrangements.

Previous Events

Memorial Service

APR 21. 1:00 PM (ET)

Bevis Funeral Home & Crematory
200 John Knox Rd
Tallahassee, FL 32303
(850) 385-2193

Tribute Wall



“ *Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Bobby F. McKown.*



April 19, 2023 at 04:25 PM



“ *Dr. Marino Martinez purchased the Blue Caribbean Bouquet for the family of Bobby F. McKown.*



Dr. Marino Martinez - April 19, 2023 at 08:28 AM



“ *Sweetest Sunrise Bouquet was purchased for the family of Bobby F. McKown.*



April 17, 2023 at 04:50 PM