



## Ernest Lenwood "Len" Taliaferro

September 4, 1938 - August 29, 2025

Ernest Lenwood Taliaferro Jr., long-time Public Relations executive for Central Telephone Company of Florida (Centel), died August 29, 2025. He was 86. Taliaferro was a native of Osceola, Arkansas. He leaves his widow, Marcia Vance Leonard Taliaferro, a native of Little Rock. Taliaferro was the oldest son of the late Ernest L. Taliaferro Sr., of Osceola, and Bonnie Fay Ogan Taliaferro of Wynne, Arkansas.

The couple transferred to Tallahassee in 1981 with their late daughter, Angelyn, when Taliaferro was named Public Relations Manager for Centel's Florida operations. He had previously served as the company's National Media Relations Manager at its Corporate Headquarters in Chicago.

Taliaferro joined Centel in 1977 as Public Relations Supervisor for its Las Vegas, Nevada, operation until being transferred to Chicago in 1979.

Taliaferro was a high school graduate of Columbia Military Academy in Columbia, Tennessee, where he attended for four years. He also attended Southwestern at Memphis (now Rhodes College), Arkansas State College (now Arkansas State University) and graduated from the University of Arkansas in 1961 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Journalism.

At Columbia Military Academy, Taliaferro was a member of the school's Gold Star Drill Platoon, which twice won the Mid-South Drill Team Championships held at Vanderbilt University in 1955 and 1956. The Gold Star Drill Platoon appeared in parades throughout the south, including Mardi Gras in New Orleans, Holiday In Dixie at Shreveport, Louisiana, and the Memphis,

Tennessee Cotton Carnival.

Taliaferro served as a columnist and managing editor of The Arkansas Traveler, the University of Arkansas Student newspaper. He also served as a volunteer Public Information Chair for the Washington County, Arkansas, Chapter of the American Red Cross.

After graduation, Taliaferro served in the Army Reserve for four years, almost a year of it on active duty during the Berlin Crisis, Taliaferro was honorably discharged in 1966. During his initial military training, Taliaferro served as trainee platoon sergeant for his basic training company at Fort Chaffee, Arkansas. He was an honor graduate of his advanced training class at Fort Leonard, Wood, Missouri.

He was released from active duty in 1962 and served for a short time as editor of the Alice News, a weekly newspaper in Alice, Texas. In 1963, Taliaferro joined the Associated Press Bureau in Little Rock, Arkansas, serving as a legislative reporter/editor covering the State Senate during the Arkansas legislative session.

Taliaferro left the AP in 1965 to become Assistant Public Information Officer for the Arkansas State Rehabilitation Service. While there, he met his wife-to-be, who was a psychiatric social worker for the agency's Benton State Hospital Rehabilitation unit.

As Assistant Public Information Officer for the State of Rehabilitation Service, Taliaferro was executive producer of and wrote the story for an award-winning documentary motion picture about the agency, which was aired on television stations throughout the state of Arkansas.

In 1968, Taliaferro became Public Relations Director for St. Vincent Infirmary in Little Rock, a 1000-bed hospital and trauma center operated by the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth. Taliaferro was responsible for all of the hospital's internal and external communications.

He developed the hospital's first employee publication called The Trumpet, a winner of American Advertising Federation Addy Awards in several categories. During this time, Taliaferro became active in the Arkansas

Advertising Federation Ad Club in Little Rock.

In 1970, Taliaferro joined Allied Telephone Company of Little Rock, a fast-growing independent telephone company with operations in Arkansas, Oklahoma, Texas, Tennessee, Missouri, and Kentucky, where he served for seven years with responsibility for corporate contributions, media relations, internal and external communications, including the company's Addy Award-winning annual report.

Taliaferro was elected president-elect of the Arkansas Advertising Federation Club in Little Rock in 1977, just before he joined Centel in Las Vegas. Not finding an Ad Club in Las Vegas, Taliaferro pulled together numerous public relations and advertising executives from the community to create one. He was elected founding President of the Greater Las Vegas Advertising Federation.

After arriving in Tallahassee, Taliaferro was elected in 1982 to his first of two terms as President of the Greater Tallahassee Advertising Federation. Under his leadership, the club grew from 35 members to over 100. Taliaferro became active in the 4th District of the American Federation in the early 1980s, serving as co-chair of the state Addy Awards and as a member of the American Advertising Federation's National Addy Awards Committee. He was elected Treasurer of the 4th District of the American Advertising Federation (Florida and the Caribbean) in 1986, which put him in the chairs for the District Governorship in four years.

However, in 1986, Taliaferro gave up his advertising responsibilities when he was one of seven managers across the nation selected by Centel to develop the Company's first quality process.

Under the direction of Centel CEO John P. Frazee and Vice President William Nesbitt, the program rolled out in the states in 1988, and over the next four years, Taliaferro taught the new way of doing business to all 2,500 of Centel's employees throughout the state. The program was disbanded after Centel's merger with United Telephone in 1992 to become Sprint.

In 1992, Centel returned to Taliaferro to his former Public Relations responsibilities just before the merger. Following the merger, Taliaferro was named Public Affairs Manager for a portion of Leon County and the five rural counties surrounding Leon County. He served in that position until his retirement in 2007. As Public Affairs manager, he was a legislative lobbyist during the state's annual legislative session while maintaining relationships with county and community leaders in the five-county area.

Throughout his 26-year tenure in Florida with Centel and its successor companies, Taliaferro was active in the community. In addition to his American Advertising Federation affiliations, Taliaferro served as President or Chair of the Wakulla County Chamber of Commerce, the Region 5 Workforce Board and the Tallahassee Ballet.

He was a past member of the Board of Directors of the Tallahassee United Way, the Tallahassee Jr. Museum (now the Tallahassee Museum of Science and History) and Springtime Tallahassee.

In 1994, Taliaferro was elected to serve as Andrew Jackson XXIII, figurehead of Springtime Tallahassee, and traveled with his wife, Marcia, to festivals throughout the Southeast as goodwill ambassadors for Springtime Tallahassee as well as for the Tallahassee Community as a whole. Mrs. Taliaferro had served as General Chair of Springtime Tallahassee in 1986. Taliaferro was the Krewe Chief of the War and Reconstruction Krewe of Springtime Tallahassee in 1989.

Taliaferro and his wife were avid sailors, campers, and canoeists. They became members of the Grande Maumelle Sailing Club in Little Rock in 1968 and sailed the 17-foot Thistle sailboat in regattas throughout Arkansas, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Oklahoma from the late 60s until they left Arkansas in 1977.

The couple spent many vacations camping throughout the U.S. At the time of his death, Taliaferro had traveled to every state in the U.S. except Hawaii, North Dakota, and Rhode Island. They canoed many of the white water streams in southern Missouri and throughout Arkansas and were active with a

group of canoeists who worked to save the Buffalo River, which eventually became the nation's first National River.

After their arrival in Tallahassee, the couple progressed to larger sailboats, which enabled them to cruise the Gulf coastal waters throughout Florida and to the Bahamas. They sold their sailboat in 2005 and began ship cruising. After his retirement in 2007, the couple cruised or traveled several times a year through Europe and the Caribbean.

Taliaferro was initiated into Kappa Sigma Fraternity at Rhodes College in 1957.

Taliaferro was a lifelong Christian who grew up in the Baptist Church but became an Episcopalian in 1963 in a special confirmation ceremony following the death of his brother in a military plane crash.

The Taliaferros were part of a group of 700 parishioners who departed St. John's Episcopal Church with Father Eric Dudley in 2005 to form St. Peter's Anglican Church. Taliaferro was a member of Christ Church of Tallahassee, an independent church in the Anglican tradition.

In addition to his brother, Benjamin Wesley Taliaferro, and his daughter, Taliaferro was preceded in death by his sister, Bonnie Lenora Taliaferro Hawkins of Walls, Mississippi.

A Celebration of Life service will be held at 2:00 p.m. Tuesday, September 16th at Christ Church of Tallahassee, 2100 Thomasville Road, Tallahassee, Florida

# Previous Events

## Celebration of Life

SEP **16.** 2:00 PM (ET)

Christ Church Tallahassee  
2100 Thomasville Road  
Tallahassee, FL 32308

# Tribute Wall



“ *Medium Dish Garden was purchased for the family of Ernest Lenwood "Len" Taliaferro.*



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September 04, 2025 at 06:46 PM