



A. J. FLETCHER

## A.J. Fletcher dies at 91

Funeral services were held Tuesday for Alfred Johnston Fletcher, chairman and chief executive officer of Capitol Broadcasting Co., who died Sunday at Rex Hospital in Raleigh at age 91.

Services were conducted at the Hayes Barton Baptist Church.

A. J. Fletcher was born in Ashe County on Oct. 10, 1887, son of the Rev. James F. and Louisa Barker Fletcher. He was educated in the public schools of Grayson County, Va., Ashe County, and at Wake Forest College Law School.

In his early career he served as newspaper editor (*Enterprise*, Mooresville, and *Journal*, Apex,) and secretary to Congressman Robert L. Doughton. He practiced law in Sparta and Fuquay before opening his Raleigh office

in 1919.

Fletcher was married first to Elizabeth Utley of Apex. They were the parents of four children: Fred Fletcher of Raleigh; Frank Fletcher of Washington, D.C.; Floyd Fletcher of Durham; and Betty Lou Fletcher, deceased, who was married to Ray H. Goodman, Jr. of Raleigh.

Eleven years ago, Fletcher married the former Margaret Harrington of Raleigh. In addition to Mrs. Fletcher and his three sons, Fletcher is survived by a sister, Mrs. Annie Bingham of Lexington, 11 grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren.

A graduate of the Wake Forest Law School, he started his practice in 1911 and soon earned a reputation as one of the best surety lawyers in North Carolina. His law partners went on to

become judges: Franklin T. Dupree Jr. is now a U.S. District Court Judge and I. Beverly Lake, Sr., who recently retired as an Associate Justice of the North Carolina Supreme Court.

In addition to his extensive law practice, A.J. Fletcher was active in the business community. In 1931, with former Governor J. Melville Broughton, he founded Montlawn Memorial Park. In 1939, he established Capitol Broadcasting Company, which operates stations WRAL-TV, WRAL-FM, the Tobacco Radio Network, the North Carolina News Network, Capitol Publications, Capitol Background Music and Seeburg Music Library, Inc. Capitol Broadcasting Company recently agreed to purchase WKEE-AM

(SEE PAGE 10)

## Death ends Fletcher's career

(FROM PAGE 1)  
and WKEE-FM in Huntington, West Va.

At Capitol Broadcasting Company, Fletcher placed major emphasis on involvement in community and civic projects. Under his leadership, WRAL-TV was one of the first television stations in the country to establish daily editorials. He was a strong advocate of the free enterprise system.

Fifty years ago, Fletcher was a founder of Dixie Life Insurance Company, which became Southern Life Insurance Company, now headquartered in Greensboro. He continued to be a stockholder and active director of Southern Life until his death.

One of his greatest loves was opera, and because of A.J. Fletcher, more than two million North Carolina school children have seen and heard opera sung in English. He founded the Grass Roots Opera Company in 1948 to introduce the art form to students. It later became the National Opera Company.

His philanthropy has included grants to churches, the Baptist State Convention and several educational institutions, including Ravenscroft School, Duke University, East Carolina University, and Southeastern Theological Seminary. In 1961, he founded the non-profit A.J. Fletcher Educational and Opera Foundation, Inc. to carry on certain cultural and educational programs.

In 1971, Fletcher's contribution to the arts was recognized at East Carolina University by the naming of its music buildings complex as "The A.J. Fletcher Music Center".

In 1973, the Exchange Club of North Raleigh presented Fletcher with the Book of Golden Deeds Award, "in recognition of his contributions to his city, state and nation in the fields of entertainment, education and the fine arts."

In 1974, Fletcher received a national award for the WRAL-TV Gardens, which he designed, from the American Association of Nurserymen.

In 1975, Fletcher was elected to the North Carolina Association of Broadcasters Hall of Fame. Also in 1975, he was awarded an

honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree by Duke University. That same year, the Baptist State Convention, in recognition of a matching grant from Fletcher, dedicated its new communications facility in Raleigh as "The A.J. Fletcher Baptist Communications Center."

In 1977, Fletcher received the National Abe Lincoln Railsplitter Award presented by the Southern Baptist Convention for his pioneering in broadcasting.

In 1978, Fletcher was the recipient of the North Carolina Public Service Award presented by the Pfeiffer College Alumni Association.

A. J. Fletcher's interests varied from the stage, landscape design, to sports. In his younger years he was in demand as a singer and actor in Raleigh churches and Little Theatre. With his three sons, he formed a Father and Three Sons Tennis Team and issued an international challenge for the World Championship. When no one accepted the challenge, the Fletcher team claimed the title.

In 1967, during a six-week period, Fletcher celebrated his 80th birthday, got married for the second time, was admitted to practice before the United States Supreme Court, chased a burglar from his home, and shot his age on the golf course.

Fletcher was a charter member of Hayes Barton Baptist Church, the Kiwanis Club of Raleigh, the Raleigh Rotary Club, Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia Fraternity of America, the National Federation of Music Clubs, the Raleigh Music Club, and national, State and local Bar Associations and the American Judicature Society.

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