



John Ansley Ritch

July 2, 1929 - October 18, 2023

John Ritch took his seat in the French horn section in the orchestra in heaven on Wednesday evening, October 18, 2023. He died at his residence, attended by his family. He was 94 years old.

John Ansley Ritch was born on July 2, 1929, in Charlotte, North Carolina. His parents were Perry H. Ritch, Sr., and Mary Honeycutt Ritch. John and his brothers Perry, Jr. and Bob grew up in Greensboro, North Carolina, where they were introduced to music in elementary school. Seven-year-old John wanted to play the trombone but found his arms were too short, so he settled for trumpet and then French horn, which turned out to be his favorite.

John served as the band's drum major at Greensboro High School (now Grimsley High), and when he graduated in 1947, he was offered a scholarship from the music department at the University of Georgia. He played in the marching and concert bands, the orchestra, and jazz bands. He was a charter member of Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia, a music fraternity. He also found time to earn a letter on the UGA swimming team! At the University, a young lady caught his eye; Jo Anne Hall played French horn in the orchestra also, and they began dating.

John graduated with a Music Education degree in 1951 and taught in the Watkinsville area before joining the U.S. Army, serving in the Third Army Band

at Fort McPherson. There he was joined by his two brothers, who also played in the Army Band.

After his discharge in 1953, John and his college roommate, William Tillison, came to Newnan to be the city schools' band directors. In January of 1955, he and Jo Anne married, bought a home, and started a family. When Tillison left the area, John took over all of the bands in the city schools: Elm Street, Atkinson, Newnan Jr. High, and Newnan High School.

In those early days, before Booster clubs, budgets, and assistants, John found inventive ways to furnish his students with music, instruments, and opportunities to play. Civic clubs funded trips to UGA Band Day every year. In 1967, he enlisted the help of the Kiwanis Club to purchase much-needed new uniforms for the high school band. They were designed by John and Jo Anne, creating a smart new look for the band at the newly opened Drake Stadium.

In the summers, Ritch joined with the County Recreation Department to offer a Summer Band Program, free for musicians of all ages, allowing them to continue playing and to take up new instruments.

When the City and County Schools merged in 1970, Ritch took on more schools' music programs, also offering Music Appreciation and Fine Arts Classes. He joined the first faculty of Evans Jr. High School, creating a large and successful band there.

John and his wife joined First Baptist Church of Newnan in 1959. He served there faithfully as a deacon, choir member, and Sunday School Teacher. He served on the building committee for the Main Sanctuary and headed the Organ Purchase Committee. He was also a member and officer of the Newnan Civitan Club and the Georgia Music Educators Association.

John and Jo Anne had three daughters-Jill, Becky, and Jeannie-who took their places in the Newnan bands. All three attended UGA and joined the Redcoat Band, as did Jill's husband, Mike, and their daughter, Ansley.

John Ritch introduced music to thousands of students in Coweta County; his aim was to create a fun, friendly environment for his learners. He could play any band instrument! He took great pride in the growth of our bands in Coweta County. John loved to talk to people and made friends everywhere, always asking, "Where are you from?" Chances are, he had been there! He enjoyed marching with the Redcoat Alumni Band at UGA Homecoming games and watching every Georgia football game on TV with his family.

The funeral service will be held on Sunday, October 22, 2023, at 4:00 p.m. at First Baptist Church of Newnan, 15 W Washington St, Newnan, GA 30263, with Dr. Jimmy Patterson officiating. Family and friends will gather an hour prior to service time. The burial will follow the service at Oak Hill Cemetery, 96 Jefferson Street, Newnan, GA 30263.

Condolences can be expressed online at www.mckoon.com

John Ritch joins his wife, Jo Anne, who died in 2003. His children are Jill (Mike) Exner, Becky (Bud) Freeburg, and Jeannie (Craig Bryan). He has seven grandchildren, to whom he was known as "Boompa": Ansley (Adam) Dennis, Erin (Ricky) Walker, Joanna (Colby) Brown, Mary (Kerry) Moore, Laura (Adam) Ivey, Rachel (Anthony) Spagna, and Jack Bryan. He has eleven great-grandchildren, with another to be born next month. He also leaves his brother Bob (Dawn) Ritch, brother-in-law Don (Carolyn) Hall, honorary family member Carolyn Sale, and nieces and nephews.

The family welcomes flowers or a donation to your favorite organization. Honor him by loving each other, having fun, and making music!

McKoon Funeral Home & Crematory (770) 253-4580

Cemetery Details

Oak Hill Cemetery

96 Jefferson Street
Newnan, GA 30263
(770) 253-3744

Previous Events

Visitation

OCT **22**. 3:00 PM - 4:00 PM (ET)

First Baptist Church of Newnan
15 West Washington Street
Newnan, GA 30263

Funeral Service

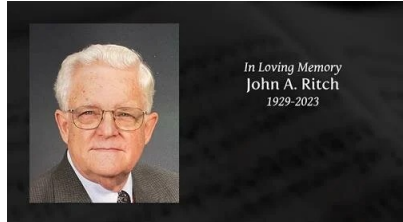
OCT **22**. 4:00 PM - 5:00 PM (ET)

First Baptist Church of Newnan
15 West Washington Street
Newnan, GA 30263

Tribute Wall



“ *McKoon Funeral Home & Crematory created a Tribute Video in memory of John Ansley Ritch*



McKoon Funeral Home & Crematory - October 24, 2023 at 08:45 AM

DN

“ *Rest in Peace Mr. Ritch. Dora Neal NHS c/o 1981.*



Dora Neal - November 05, 2023 at 06:41 PM

TS

“ *Tim Shoemake lit a candle in memory of John Ansley Ritch*



Tim Shoemake - October 24, 2023 at 12:13 PM



“ So sorry to learn of John’s passing. I was in the high school band from 1957 to 1960, playing bass horn (sousaphone). Remember a lot of good times in the band with practice on the old picket field football field, out-of-town football games, home basketball games, and concerts.

Was really surprised and happy when John contacted me on Facebook this year. Surprised he remembered me after 63 years. He was a great teacher and will be missed. My deepest condolences.

Kirby White

Kirby White - October 22, 2023 at 12:00 AM

MH

“ What a sweet ma'am was your daddy. Reading his obituary brought to light just how wonderful he truly was. May God surround you with his loving arms and may your memories sustain you during this difficult time.

Michelle Parker Hairston - October 21, 2023 at 07:06 PM

MH

*I don't know why that autocorrected to ma'am, when I man. So sorry about that.
Sending love and hugs to all of you.*

Michelle Parker Hairston - October 21, 2023 at 07:08 PM

RR

“ Our deepest sympathy on your loss.
He lived a long and happy life.

-Rick & Anna Ritch

Rick Ritch - October 21, 2023 at 04:15 PM

CO

“ *What a wonderful man! He taught all my boys to play musical instruments. He will be missed by all. Thoughts and prayers from the Cornay family'*

cornays - October 21, 2023 at 01:32 PM

JH

“ *I am so sorry for your loss! Mr. Ritch was certainly a great man, musician, and teacher!!*

Julia Huster - October 21, 2023 at 12:40 PM



“ *Tender Tribute was purchased for the family of John Ansley Ritch.*



October 21, 2023 at 12:19 PM

EG

“ *I am so very sorry for your loss. Prayers to all of you.*



Elaine Groover - October 21, 2023 at 11:40 AM

RB

“ *Mr. Ritch touched SO MANY lives with his sense of humor and his life experiences. Praying for your families. Love & hugs.*



Rev. BettyJean Bowers - October 21, 2023 at 09:11 AM

JR

“ *A life well lived! Please accept my sincere condolences.*



Jan Ritch - October 21, 2023 at 12:34 AM

AL

“ *I was a shy 7th grader when I attended OPEvans. Mr. Ritch will always be my favorite memory. He taught me a work ethic that still use today. Prayers to the family. Heaven has gained a truly musical soul.*
Annette Lee

Annette Lee - October 20, 2023 at 08:43 PM



“ *May John now rest in peace and be reunited with his love in Heaven. Thoughts and Prayers go out to the family for comfort .*
The Spagna's

Robin Spagna - October 20, 2023 at 05:09 PM



“ Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of John Ansley Ritch.



October 20, 2023 at 04:56 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of John Ansley Ritch.

October 20, 2023 at 04:56 PM



“ Joy Williams lit a candle in memory of John Ansley Ritch



Joy Williams - October 20, 2023 at 04:10 PM



“ John Rich was truly a great man and educator. I was in his bands all through school and have fond memories of him. He seemed tireless, I don't know how he handled all his responsibilities. Always patient, he encouraged the best from all his students and created a lifelong appreciation of music. He will be missed.
Tom Baird NHS Class of '63

Thomas Baird - October 20, 2023 at 01:15 PM

MB

Mr. Ritch as we addressed him was truly a called educator. My first experience with a band instrument was in seventh grade at Newnan Jr High. He told me I'd be a great trombone player as I had enough hot air to play the instrument. I laughed & laughed. He was so committed to each of his students to help them become all they could become. He will remain in many memories of sweet music. We loved him so. So happy he is back with his sweet true love 🤝🤝🤝🤝🤝🤝🤝🤝

Marla Paradise Brandenburg - October 21, 2023 at 05:26 PM

JW

“ *I was sorry to read of the passing of Mr. Ritch. I was in his band in 6th grade. He influenced so many young people during his long career and life. May he rest in peace. Thinking of you all.* ”

Jennifer Welch - October 20, 2023 at 12:10 PM

GW

“ *Please accept my sincere condolences on John's passing. We knew him and Jo Ann from the time we first moved to Newnan in 1962. He lived a very long and impressive life. May he rest in eternal peace and your memories be a blessing.* ”



Geraldine Welch - October 20, 2023 at 10:06 AM

LH

“ *John Ritch was a big part of my life growing up. He welcomed me and all of Jill's friends into their home. He let me join the band at Newnan High. We shared a love of UGA and the Dawgs. The memories are priceless.* ”

Linda Houghton - October 20, 2023 at 09:51 AM

GP

“ Gerrie Petty lit a candle in memory of John Ansley Ritch



Gerrie Petty - October 20, 2023 at 09:49 AM

JR

So sorry to hear of Jill Father passing . Our thoughts and prayers are with you and your family in this time of sorrow. May GOD give you peace and comfort during this time. Jimmy & Jeanelle

Jimmy Richardson - October 20, 2023 at 12:19 PM

PS

Sorry to hear of your loss my prayers are with you and all family members. May God Bless each one of you and give you comfort in this time. Love you

Pamela Sims - October 20, 2023 at 01:04 PM

JA

Enjoyed having Mr Ritch as band instructor at OP Evans in the early 80s'. It was a great time with great people.

Jeff Atwood - June 30, 2024 at 11:06 AM