

****Obituary for John Terrell Barker****

John Terrell Barker, 86, of Shelby, North Carolina, passed away peacefully on August 27, 2025. Born on January 17, 1939, in Gastonia, North Carolina, to the late Clyde Eddleman and Margaret Blanche Crocker Barker, John lived a life marked by boundless energy, deep relationships, and an unwavering commitment to his family, community, and profession. He was preceded in death by his beloved brother, Dr. James (Jim) Clyde Barker.

John is survived by his devoted wife, Sally Young Barker; his children, Leah (Brad) Bailey, John (Rowena) Terrell Barker, Jr., and Patrick (Kimberly) Barker; his sister, Anne Burr; and his cherished grandchildren, Kruesi Barker, Jack Barker, Crocker Barker, Caroline Bailey, Lily Grace Bailey, and Trudi Barker. His legacy of love, leadership, and service will live on through them.

A proud graduate of Ashley High School in Gastonia and Lenoir-Rhyne University in Hickory, John's journey was shaped by discipline and determination. He served honorably in the U.S. Army at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, from 1961 to 1963, before embarking on a remarkable career in real estate. Under the mentorship of his father-in-law, the late H. Fields Young, Jr., John began developing shopping centers in 1964. In 1970, he founded John Barker Realty, Inc., where he served as President and built a legacy as a titan of industrial real estate.

John's career was defined by his transformative impact on economic development across the Southeast. Through his one-man real estate office, he brokered hundreds of deals, bringing manufacturing plants and job opportunities to communities in 27 states. His success stemmed from his brilliant tactical mind, gregarious personality, and genuine love for people. John mastered the art of the deal by forging close personal relationships, working tirelessly from dawn to dusk, and immersing himself in every detail—from studying sewer maps and terrain from planes to collaborating with municipalities and networking with landowners, CEOs, and industry leaders. His relentless drive and innovative approach left an indelible mark on the region's economic landscape.

John's professional achievements were widely recognized. He earned the prestigious SIOR designation from the Society of Industrial and Office Realtors and the Counselor of Real Estate (CRE) designation. In 1983, he was honored with North Carolina's Order of the Long Leaf Pine for his exemplary service to the state. In 2004, the Charlotte Commercial Board of Realtors awarded him the Industry Leadership Award for his excellence in commercial real estate and civic leadership. John's commitment to his community extended to his service on the Atrium Cleveland Hospital Board, Cleveland Country Club Board, Cleveland Community College Board of Trustees, and Gardner-Webb University Board of Advisors.

A faithful member of Zion Baptist Church in Shelby, John was a beloved figure in his Sunday School class, where he brought warmth and joy to every gathering. His fellow classmate shared, "John lit the room up another thousand watts with his huge smile, cup of coffee." John's faith and fellowship were a cornerstone of his life, and his radiant spirit will be deeply missed by his church family.

John's zest for life extended to his hobbies and passions. As a teenager, he excelled in water skiing, earning numerous first-place trophies in slalom competitions. His love for the outdoors continued with horseback riding, where he showed Tennessee Walking Horses and won countless blue ribbons. Above all, John found solace in farm life, where nothing soothed his soul more than driving his John Deere tractor and cutting hay in the early evening hours of summer, surrounded by the beauty of the land he cherished.

Most of all, John Barker loved people. He greeted everyone with a handshake and a smile, taking a genuine interest in their lives and never forgetting a single detail. His warmth and curiosity made every encounter meaningful, leaving a lasting impression on all who knew him. John will be sorely missed, but his family finds immense comfort in knowing he has crossed over to God's kingdom of heaven, where his charismatic personality will shine eternally.