

LARRY WELLS KENNEDY  
January 13, 1942 – September 21, 2006



Larry Kennedy, the only son of Wells Kennedy and Cecilia Johnson Kennedy, was born in Ville Platt, Louisiana on January 13, 1942. He died on September 21, 2006.

Dr. Kennedy grew up in Pensacola, Florida, where he graduated from Escambia High School. He received a history degree from Louisiana College. Other degrees he earned include a Master's in Theology from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and Master's or Arts and Doctor of Philosophy from Mississippi State University.

Dr. Kennedy pastored churches in Mississippi until 1990. Broadman Press published two of his books: *Down With Anxiety* and *God's Answer to Human Dilemmas*.

In 1991, Dr. Kennedy began his tenure at William Carey University. In 1998, he was named President/Chief Executive Officer.

Survivors include his wife, Sarah Johnson Kennedy; son, Stephen Kennedy, his wife Farrah, and grandson, Wells, of Jackson, MS; son, Scott Kennedy of Missooula, Montana; stepson, Kyle Robertson of Laurel, MS; parents, Wells and Cecilia Kennedy of Pensacola, FL; and sister, Toni Perlman of Peachtree City, Georgia.

HATTIESBURG, Miss. (BP)--Larry Kennedy, president of William Carey University, died from complications from ALS (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or Lou Gehrig's Disease) in the early morning hours of Sept. 21 at his home in Hattiesburg, Miss. He was 64.

Kennedy, who was diagnosed with the disease in July 2005, had been president of the Baptist-related university since 1998.

Kennedy joined William Carey's faculty in 1991. He served as professor of religion, dean of the Cooper School of Missions and Biblical Studies and vice president of church relations and was the university's interim president from October 1997 until his selection as president in August 1998.

Under his leadership, William Carey's enrollment grew from 1,980 to 3,000 students as new programs and degrees were added in Hattiesburg and at the university's Gulf Coast campus. Its 550 graduates last May marked the largest commencement in the university's 100-year history. William Carey's accreditation was reaffirmed for 10 years and \$22 million in construction and renovation projects were completed during his tenure. The university, founded in 1906, is debt-free as it celebrates its centennial, with its \$7-million-plus debt paid off in January 10 months ahead of schedule.

Colleagues recounted appreciation for Kennedy's contagious laugh, creative problem-solving and fairness to all individuals, while embracing the motto of the university's namesake, William Carey, the father of the modern missions movement: "Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God."

"Dr. Kennedy is an example of a man facing a deteriorating disease with class and dignity and resolve," said Rep. Chip Pickering, R.-Miss., in a news release during ALS Awareness Month in May. "He reminds us that anyone can be afflicted by this condition which has no currently known cause, cure or means of prevention."

The Pickering news release recounted that Kennedy's intention to announce his condition in September 2005 was derailed by Hurricane Katrina, which ravaged the Hattiesburg campus, destroyed the Gulf Coast campus and closed the university's nursing school in New Orleans. "After shepherding the school through that natural disaster," the news release stated, "Dr. Kennedy again put off his

announcement ... when the college was presented with a generous contribution ... so as not to detract from the news of the gift. He finally announced his condition in the spring of 2006.”

Kennedy also had received numerous community honors; in 2005, he was named Executive of the Year by the Sales and Marketing Executives of Hattiesburg.

Previously as a pastor in Mississippi, Kennedy had served in various roles with the Mississippi Baptist Convention, including membership on the Executive Committee and the Education Commission. He also served as a trustee of the Southern Baptist International Mission Board for eight years.

He was the author of two books, “Down with Anxiety” and “God’s Answers to Human Dilemmas.”

A native of Ville Platte, La., he grew up in Pensacola, Fla.; received a history degree from Louisiana College; and earned a master of theology degree from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and master of arts and Ph.D. degrees in history from Mississippi State University.

Survivors include his wife Sarah Johnson Kennedy; two sons, Stephen of Jackson, Miss., and Scott Kennedy of Missoula, Mont.; a stepson, Kyle Robertson of Laurel, Miss.; one grandson; and his parents, Wells Earnest and Cecilia Kennedy of Pensacola, Fla.

A memorial service will be held at 2 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 23, in the Thomas Fine Arts Center on the Hattiesburg campus. Visitation will be from 5:30-9 p.m. Friday in the Thomas Business Building, also on campus.

In lieu of flowers, Kennedy had asked that donations be made to the Larry W. Kennedy Scholarship Fund at William Carey University.

## **William Carey University president dies at 64**

HATTIESBURG - William Carey University President Larry Wells Kennedy, diagnosed in January with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), also known as Lou Gehrig's disease, died Thursday. He was 64.

Kennedy became president in 1998 and is credited with erasing the university's \$7.5 million debt while simultaneously launching its first new building projects in years.

William Carey is a 100-year-old Baptist college with campuses in Hattiesburg, Gulfport and New Orleans. The school switched its name from college to university earlier this year

Director of Facilities Robert Blevins said Kennedy's ambition to improve William Carey's appearance was undergirded by his profound concern for students.

"He and I spent hours combing the campus, walking, discussing what we see, what we don't see, what we need, the safety and security every aspect you can think of," Blevins said. "It was all about the students were they safe, were they comfortable."

A memorial service is scheduled for 2 p.m. Saturday in Smith Auditorium in the Thomas Fine Arts Center.

ALS is a progressive neurodegenerative disease that affects nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord. The disease causes a break in the communication between the muscles and the brain. It claimed the life of New York Yankees' first baseman Lou Gehrig in 1941.