



## **Rev. Vernice Jasper Ragsdale, Okeechobee, FL Memoriam**

(Information contributed by Vernice's son-in-law,  
John Burdeshaw):

Rev. Vernice Jasper Ragsdale was born in Cullman, Alabama, June 6, 1913. His family moved to Lawrenceburg, TN when he was twelve years old. He had five sisters and one half sister. As a child, he was not able to get much schooling, because at the age of four he was sent to the fields to work with his father.

His parents later separated. The children were placed in a foster home with the N. N. Skinner family. He worked on their farm for his room and board. He cultivated and farmed 35 acres of land. When he hired out to work on other farms, he earned 50 cents/day; when he picked cotton he earned 50 cents/hundred weight.

Vernice received a call to the ministry while working in the fields. He realized that if he was going to enter the ministry, as he had been called to do, it was necessary for him to obtain an education. At the age of 22 with the equivalent of an 8<sup>th</sup> grade education, he entered Baxter Seminary. Baxter was a Methodist-affiliated college-preparatory school. Children who had no money could work to pay for their room and board and tuition.

Vernice worked before and after school and on Saturday for 40 hours/week. He was manager of the school truck farm where they grew food for the school. Vegetables were canned; the 12 to 15 milkcows had to be milked mornings and nights.

Later, while still in school, he had a student pastorate where he was given a circuit to preach on the weekends. The towns were 3, 6, 12, and 18 miles away. He walked to the communities on Saturday and preached on the streets on Saturday afternoon. Then he preached on Sunday and walked back to school. Each church allotted a certain amount of pay - - usually in the form of a jar of beans or a chicken. Not much cash was received.

Vernice graduated from Baxter on May 19, 1941, just before his 28<sup>th</sup> birthday. He married Emman Doyne Denny, who was a Baxter student also.

Vernice attended State Teachers College, Murfreesboro, TN. Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia, and obtained his Bachelor of Arts in Education in 1948 from the University of Florida at the age of 35 years.

He served the Florida Conference from 1948 till 1979. Some of his churches were: Webster and Cross City.

He accomplished what he set out to do when he received God's calling on the Tennessee farm in 1935.

In 1965, Vernice remarried. He had raised two sons: Denny (a physician in Melbourne) and Dural (a Methodist minister in Louisiana). His wife was Corinne Burdeshaw.

Vernice Ragsdale died in 2003, bringing to a close an extremely successful life spent working on behalf on the Church. The difficult times of the Great Depression, the memories of his upbringing, his education, and his fine achievements, and the fact that Vernice attained his goals, should be an inspiration to everyone.

Vernice J. Ragsdale was a graduate of Baxter Seminary in 1942.

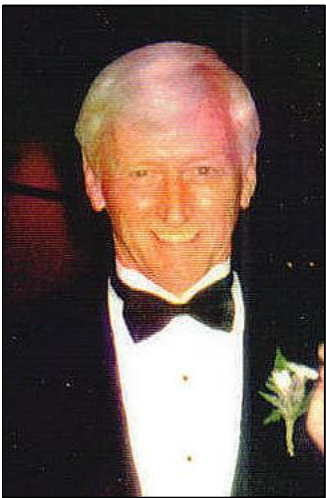
**Source:** All Roads Lead to Baxter  
A Story of Baxter Seminary, Baxter, TN: Pgs: 250-251  
By Anita Cunningham Mitchum: 2005: UMC Class of 1951  
Anita C. Mitchum  
302 High Crest Road  
Signal Mountain, TN 37377

**Source:** Florida United Methodist Review Online – In Memoriam  
<http://www.flumc.org/comline/rearchive/2003/070403s7.htm>

The Rev. Vernice J. Ragsdale, a Florida Conference elder, died March 23, 2003.

Ordained a deacon in 1955, Ragsdale served churches in Avon Park, Callahan, Cross City, DeBary, Webster, Okeechobee, Matecumbe, Starke and St. Petersburg. He retired in 1979.

\*See: Chapter 5 – Emma Doyne Denny for more information.  
<http://www.ajlambert.com>



Dr. Vernice Denny Ragsdale



Rev. Dural Ragsdale



Emma Doyne Denny Ragsdale McGregor with her two boys, Dr. Vernice Denny Ragsdale & Rev. Dural Ragsdale. This picture was taken December 1994 at the Nashville Music City Hotel where Emma was receiving a distinguished service award in nursing. Emma said she was crying at the time because her sons had surprised her and showed up at the ceremony that day.