

**TTU ALUMNUS CHARGES NEW GRADS TO LIVE REST OF LIFE  
WITH LOVE AND KINDNESS**

(Pictured: TTU President Phillip Oldham, at the podium, addresses a group of more than 780 undergraduate and graduate students and their families during fall commencement ceremonies held Saturday. Ty Kernea | Herald-Citizen)



**TTU** — Words from a first-generation college student hit home for guests and graduates at Tennessee Tech University’s commencement ceremony Saturday, as Beecher Hunter charged TTU’s newest grads to find their success in life by practicing love and kindness. His father, Waymon, was a barber, and his mother, Rebecca, worked in the home until Hunter was a junior in high school. TTU alumnus

Hunter was the first in his family to attend and graduate from college. His father was a barber and his mother worked in the home until Hunter was a junior in high school.



(Pictured: **Beecher Hunter**, president of Life Care Centers of America and 1961 TTU graduate, addresses undergraduate and graduate students during the commencement ceremonies. Beecher, a frequent public speaker, is known for his motivational and inspirational addresses. Ty Kernea | Herald-Citizen).

as a dishwasher in a restaurant in downtown Cookeville for a couple of years, and then found a job with Wilson Sporting Goods, from which she retired.”

Hunter received his bachelor’s degree in English at TTU in 1961.

More than 20 years after his graduation, Hunter ran into a banker friend at lunch, who said, “I’m going to break a promise to your mother, because there is something you ought to know. There were about three times while you were in college that your mother came to the bank and asked to borrow money. When I asked her why she needed it, she said, ‘Beecher needs a little help in school.’ She always paid those loans off on time.”

At that point, Hunter said, “My mother announced to the family that she would try to find a public job to help her three sons get a college education. She went to work

“When I graduated from Tech in 1961, I didn’t have the money to buy a ring. I wanted one, very badly, but I just couldn’t afford it,” Hunter said. “On Christmas Day in 1963, while my wife, Lola, and I were visiting with my parents, under the tree was a small gift, beautifully wrapped. When I opened it, there was my Tennessee Tech ring. My mother had saved the money to buy what she knew I wanted.

“I wear this ring every day as a symbol of my love for this university. But I also wear it proudly as an emblem of the sacrificial love of my mother and her determination to see her sons get a college education that she was never able to have.”

Hunter is now president of Life Care Centers of America, the nation’s third largest provider of long-term health care that operates 225 skilled nursing facilities in 28 states.

“First-generation college students go on to have an amazing impact on their families and communities and are often times outspoken advocates for college education,” said TTU President Phil Oldham, who invited Hunter to deliver the commencement address.

During the ceremony, Oldham also recognized the influence of earlier first-generation TTU alums Josephine and Argyle McDonald. Nearly a dozen of their family members have gone on to earn 17 degrees from TTU. The latest McDonald family graduate, Mara McDonald, received her degree at Saturday’s commencement.

Nearly 800 degrees were awarded in 38 areas of undergraduate study and 19 graduate fields, building TTU’s alumni family to more than 74,000.

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**Wiley Waymon Hunter**

b. 22 February 1910, Putnam Co., TN – d. 10 August 1985, Putnam Co., TN, md to **Rebecca (Sullivan) Hunter**, b. 13 September 1915, Putnam Co., TN – d. 2 September 1999, Putnam Co., TN, d/o **William Haskell Sullivan (1892-1935) & Pearl Clementine Smith (1892-1935)**. Wiley Waymon Hunter, s/o **Beecher Hunter & Susan Armildred Callahan**.

\*See Beecher Hunter buried in Shipley Church Cemetery.

\*See Rebecca (Sullivan) Hunter Obt.

**Rebecca (Sullivan) Hunter Obt.**

b. 13 September 1915, Putnam Co., TN – d. 2 September 1999, Putnam Co., TN, md **Wiley Waymon Hunter**, b. 22 February 1910, Putnam Co., TN – d. 10 August 1985, Putnam Co., TN, s/o **Beecher Hunter & Susan Callahan**. Rebecca (Sullivan) Hunter, d/o **William Haskell Sullivan (1892-1935) & Pearl Clementine Smith (1892-1935)**, both buried in the Choate Cemetery, Putnam Co., TN.

\*See Wiley Waymon Hunter buried in Shipley Cemetery.

**COOKEVILLE** -- Funeral services for **Rebecca Sullivan Hunter**, 83, of Cookeville, will be held at 2 p.m. on Sat., Sept. 4, at West View Baptist Church. The body will lie in state from 1-2 p.m. on Saturday at the church. **Burial will be in Shipley Cemetery.**

The family will receive friends from 6-9 p.m. today, Fri., Sept. 3, at Dyer Funeral Home.

Mrs. Hunter died on Thurs., Sept. 2, 1999 at Cookeville Regional Medical Center.

She was born on Sept. 13, 1915, in Putnam County to the late **William Haskell** and **Pearline Smith Sullivan**. Mrs. Hunter was retired from Wilson Sporting Goods. She was a charter member of West View Baptist Church. Mrs. Hunter was a volunteer of Cookeville Regional Auxiliary with 7,022 volunteer hours as of April of 1989.

Her family includes **three sons and two daughters-in-law, Beecher and Lola Hunter** of Cleveland, **Gerald Hunter** of Memphis, and **Dr. Harold and Marilyn Hunter** of Hermitage; two sisters, Lura

Nabors and Margaret Norris, both of Cookeville; a brother, William Sullivan Jr. of Seymour; three grandsons, Chad and Braxton Hunter of Hermitage, and Dr. Tom Carman of Clarksville; and several nieces, nephews, special friend Debbie Maberry, and a host of other friends.

In addition to her parents, she was also preceded in death by her **husband, Waymon Hunter**.

Pallbearers will be Frank Massa, Frank Layne, Junior Howell, Charles, Terry, and James Nabors, and Joe Maberry.

Donations may be made to the West View Baptist Church Building Fund.

Dr. Harold Hunter and Bro. Chuck Branch will officiate at the services.

\*Read more Schoolyard Tales at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>