

James Zachary "Jack" Rabun, 98, died Friday, June 20, 2008.

He was born Aug. 10, 1909, in Albany to Zachary Taylor and Cora Bell Rabun. He grew up in Albany and Morgan. He graduated summa cum laude from Mercer University in 1936. He earned a master's degree from the University of North Carolina in 1937 and a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago in 1947. He taught in the public schools in Georgia and North Carolina from 1927-38, including five years as principal of the high school in Conyers.

He served in the U.S. Navy during World War II, commanding sub chasers and patrol craft in the Atlantic and Pacific. He eventually retired from the Naval Reserve with the rank of commander.

He taught history at Emory University from 1947-87 and served as chairman of the history department in the 1970s. He was a member of numerous professional and honor societies and was known as an authority on the history of the American South and on American constitutional history. He wrote an unpublished biography and lectured on the life of Alexander H. Stephens and Robert Toombs, two antebellum politicians from Georgia. He was the author of articles in historical journals and won awards for distinguished teaching at Emory, including the Emory Williams Award in 1973. He also taught as a visiting professor at the University of Wisconsin, New York University and in West Germany. He did his last teaching in 2003 at Emory's Senior University.

He spent 40 years restoring and improving an 1848 mountain farmhouse he purchased in 1965 in Rabun County. He walked one to four miles each day and made long hikes on every continent except Antarctica. He made two trips to Nepal, a 14-day trek in 1989 to the base of Annapurna and a 23-day trek to the base of Mount Everest in 1992. He was a member of Peachtree Corners Presbyterian Church. He previously served as deacon and an elder at Emory Presbyterian Church.

Survivors include: a sister, a brother and numerous nieces and nephews.

Funeral services were held June 25 at Morgan Baptist Church. Burial followed at Morgan United Methodist Church Cemetery. A memorial service was held Friday at Little Chapel of Glenn Memorial United Methodist Church.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Cora Bell Rabun Library Fund, at the Office of Development, Erskine College, Due West, SC 29639; or the Bruce Bell Rabun Library Fund, University Advancement Office, Mercer University, Macon, GA 31207.

The Clayton Tribune, July 3, 2008