



# DeLand-Deltona Beacon

## Buford family to have party, not wake

By Rick Tonyan  
BEACON STAFF WRITER

See Buford obituary, Page 2A

Want to memorialize the late, popular *Beacon* columnist Phil Buford? Then get ready to party.

There will be no funeral or memorial service for the 69-year-old, self-styled curmudgeon and iconoclastic writer. Instead, at his request, his family is going to throw a party at his home, complete with the big-band music Buford loved.

"He did not want any kind of mourning whatsoever," said his wife, Nona, who celebrated

her 50th anniversary with Buford May 23. "He wanted to celebrate. He wanted a party."

So, the party will be held 2 to 5 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 22. Those wanting to attend may go to the parking lot of DeLand's Faith Evangelical Lutheran Church, 509 E. Pennsylvania Ave. A shuttle service will drive partygoers to the Buford home. Dress is casual.

Everyone is invited. "Y'all come. That's what he would have wanted," Nona Buford said.

Buford died early Sunday, Nov. 16, at his home, following surgery at Shands HealthCare in Gainesville. He had been struck by a fast-growing brain tumor. A complete obituary is on Page 2A of this edition, and the Opinions page, 6A, is dedicated to him this week.

Born John Philip Buford March 14, 1934, he grew up in Illinois and developed a passion for big-band music early in life. His first job was as a drummer in a dance band. He didn't stop

drumming until 1991, when he was partially disabled by a stroke.

Still, his love of music remained. In remembrance of that, his family intends to play CDs of big-band performances throughout Saturday's party.

Writing and politics closely followed drumming and big-band music on Buford's list of interests. After his stroke, he combined his skill at writing and his fascination with politics to become *The Beacon's* premier editorial



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columnist.

His columns were frequently devoted to tweaking the noses of West Volusia's political establishment.

"I think our next good opportunity for excitement will come when some of these politicians get elected and then don't vote as their supporters expect. It should be fun!" Buford wrote in one of his last columns, which ran in the Oct. 9-12 edition of *The Beacon*.

Still, Buford's easygoing writing style made him popular even with

the politicians he gigged.

"It was always tongue-in-cheek, lighthearted," said DeLand Mayor Bob Apgar, a frequent recipient of the barbs. "While many of his messages were serious, the tone was light. It was intended to bring a smile to your face. It was never personal."

When not writing and irritating politicians, Buford turned his attention toward inventing. A graduate of the University of Illinois School of Engi-

neering, he has patents on products and concepts ranging from a non-polluting automobile engine to a grilling system used in restaurants.

Buford was a veteran of the U.S. Navy, which he joined after graduating from Mount Vernon High School. He attended the University of Illinois after his naval service.

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WEEKEND, NOVEMBER 20-23, 2003

### John Philip 'Phil' Buford, 69, *Beacon* columnist, dies Nov. 16

DELAND — John Philip "Phil" Buford, 69, of North Boston Avenue, passed away at his home on Sunday, Nov. 16, 2003, at 5:53 a.m., following a brief yet fierce battle.

Mr. Buford was born March 14, 1934, in Carbondale, Ill., the son of J.L. and Dorothy (Draper) Buford. He graduated from Mount Vernon (Ill.) High School in 1952.

Following high school, he served in the U.S. Navy. After his tour of duty, Mr. Buford attended the University of Illinois, where his professors declared him a new voice in engineering.

The most important day in Mr. Buford's life was undoubtedly May 23, 1953, when he married his sweetheart for life: Nona M. Henderson.

Mr. Buford's first professional experience was playing the drums as a youngster. He continued this musical career on both a professional and amateur basis until he was partially disabled by a stroke in 1991.

His diverse professional career also included work in management, marketing, engineering, sales, research and development, consulting, and as an oil-well cementer. He was associated with Halliburton Corp., Vaculift Corp., Whiting Corp., Eriez Magnetics, American Electric Fusion Corp., Southeastern Engineering and Elmco Industries. He also served as a technical writer and computer-graphics engineer for Brunswick Defense.

Mr. Buford also holds numerous patents on products and technology that range from a hybrid-engine pollutant-free concept car, the Recon Silver Saver and Convert-a-Grill for the food-service industry, to MRI technology currently in use around the world. In 1990, Mr. Buford was named to the premier edition of *Who's Who in American Inventors*.

Following his stroke, Mr. Buford turned to freelance writing on a full-time basis. He wrote a weekly column for *The DeLand-Deltona Beacon*, and recently completed his first novel.

Mr. Buford was a member of First United Methodist Church of DeLand. Throughout his life, he was active in various civic and service organizations, including Elks, Masons, Jaycees and PTO. He inherited an avid interest in and awareness of local, state and national politics.

Mr. Buford's fondest hours were spent in the company of his beloved Nona, good friends and family. Mr. Buford will long be remembered for his energy, intelligence, passion and versatility.

He was preceded in death by his parents, infant son Robert Michael, father-in-law M.L. Henderson and brother-in-law Jack W. DeChamp.

Mr. Buford is survived by his wife

of 50 years, Nona; three children, Becky Bernhardt and her husband, Mark, of Hinckley, Ill., Scott Buford of Woodstock, Ga., and Barbara S. Buford of Atlanta; four grandchildren, Michael, David and Alexandra Bernhardt of Hinckley, and Robert Alan Buford of Titusville; a brother, Richard H. Buford of Still Pond, Md.; a sister, Barbara J. DeChamp of Carbondale; and an aunt, Mrs. Virginia Foster of Jackson, Miss.

He is also survived by his mother-in-law, two sisters-in-law, and a brother-in-law, in addition to numerous cousins, nieces and nephews.

In accordance with his wishes, Mr. Buford's family will host a celebration of his life on Saturday, Nov. 22, from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. at his home, 513 N. Boston Ave. in DeLand. Parking is limited at the house; the family asks that those attending park at Faith Evangelical Lutheran Church, 509 E. Pennsylvania Ave., where a shuttle bus will be available for transportation to the Buford home.

An additional celebration will be held in Phil's hometown of Mount Vernon, at a later date.

Memorial donations may be made to the Phil Buford Family Fund at any SouthTrust Bank branch, or to Hospice of Volusia/Flagler, 3800 Woodbriar Trail, Port Orange FL 32129.

A private interment will take place at Cypress Cemetery in Cypress, Ill.

— By Becky Bernhardt



**John Philip  
'Phil' Buford**