



**Birger Ansgar Bentsen**, age 90, passed away on Friday, October 9, 2020 in Raleigh, North Carolina. He was born on February 18, 1930, in Brooklyn, New York. He was a longtime resident of Dayton and then Westerville, Ohio. He spent the last six years of his life in Wake Forest, North Carolina.

Birger was born in Brooklyn, NY. His father had difficulty finding work in the US due to the Great Depression. When he was 3 years old he relocated with his mother and brother to their remote family farm in Norway. The Second World War came to Norway and his country was occupied for five years. He would later write about this event as a childhood memory “hammered into my mind”. This likely laid the foundation for his devotion to country and service. Life as a child was difficult, but was also filled with memories he cherished and shared often. His best friend during these years was his younger brother, Ernest, a bond which lasted throughout his lifetime. At age 16, Birger returned to his birthplace, Brooklyn NY. He was most proud of his accomplishments at Bay Ridge High School as he had sparse knowledge of English. After graduation he served in the Air Force during the Korean War. Upon return, he graduated with a bachelor’s degree in engineering from City College of New York and a master’s degree from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. He began his professional career at Pratt and Whitney in Connecticut working on heat exchangers for nuclear reactors.

During the Cold War, from 1964 until 1990 he served with the Foreign Technology Division at Wright Patterson Air Force Base, Fairborn, Ohio where he was a respected analyst and leader. In the final stages of his career he served as Chief of FTD’s Directed Energy Division. He forged deep relationships with his colleagues, and many continued through the 30 years of his retirement. Ohio became his adopted second home as he lived there for about 50 years, leaving to relocate in North Carolina in 2013.

Birger met the love of his life, Ellen Reid, when he was a college student in Brooklyn, NY. Although their parents lived blocks away from each other, they met on a blind date and were married for over 60 years and had 3 children. They spent their retirement together happily traveling the world. He was an avid reader of history and enjoyed auditing university history classes. He often said the “golden years” were some of the happiest years of his life.

Birger is predeceased by his loving wife of 62 years, Ellen Reid, and his sister Kirsten Weidman. Birger is survived by his 2 brothers, Ernest and Arthur Bentsen, his son, Dr. Steven Bentsen and his wife, Isabella, daughter Carolyn Bailey and husband Robert, and daughter Donna Steele and her husband Richard. He is also survived by 8 grandchildren: Alexandra Bailey, Ryan Bailey, Michael Bailey, Jacob Steele, Nicholas Steele, Mitchell Steele, Evelynna and Stella Bentsen.

Burial service is at Northlawn Memory Gardens in Westerville, Ohio on Tuesday, November 10th at 11AM EST, where he will be laid to rest with his wife Ellen Bentsen.

The service will be livestreamed and can be viewed at the Hill Funeral Home YouTube channel. Memorial service in person is planned post pandemic.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made in his name to North Raleigh United Methodist Church, 8501 Honeycutt Road, Raleigh, NC 27615, <https://secure.accessacs.com/access/oglogin.aspx?sn=109361>, or Church of the Messiah United Methodist, 51 N State St, Westerville, NC 43081, <http://www.messiahumc.net/support>. If desired, donations can be directed through the church to COVID related: food bank, employment initiatives.