



Britt Duane Davis

July 16, 1933 - March 2, 2025

Britt Duane Davis, a passionate advocate for the arts and accomplished in the world of finance, passed away on March 2, 2025. Born in Lamesa, Texas, on July 16, 1933, to Dan Young and Dimple Crain Davis, he conducted a lifelong symphony of contributions—set to the frenzied tempo of Rachmaninoff.

After divorcing the man who vowed, “No son of mine will ever play the piano,” Britt’s mother promptly bought a piano. By age 10, Britt had mastered it sufficiently to accompany Mary Alice Horne in their elementary school performance of “Don’t Fence Me In” in Paris, Texas. As a teenager, he was employed by the Bud Winters Dixieland Five to play area clubs and dances, where he developed the ability to play by ear.

At 17, he joined the U.S. Navy to serve in the Korean Conflict, eventually becoming a First-Class Petty Officer—the first in U.S. Naval history to achieve that rank under the age of 21. Upon his honorable discharge, he returned to Paris, Texas, and enrolled in Paris Junior College, where he was elected Mister PJC.

On July 30, 1955, Mister PJC married childhood sweetheart Mary Alice, happily fenced in with the pretty girl he had accompanied on piano eleven years earlier. The new couple moved to Austin where he enrolled in the University of Texas, juggling academics with a job at the State Board of

Control. At UT, he became an honorary member of the Tejas Club, graduating at 23 with a bachelor's degree in economics.

In 1957, he took his degree—and his growing family—to Dallas, where he became a management trainee for the National Bank of Commerce. He then moved to the First National Bank of Dallas, becoming Vice President of its trust division. He attended and graduated with honors from the Southwestern Graduate School of Banking at Southern Methodist University, where he later lectured on Trust and Probate Administration and wrote numerous articles on trust and estate administration for *Texas Bankers Monthly*.

With a reputation for boundless energy, Britt was asked to head the trust department of the newly affiliated Houston Citizen's Bank & Trust Company, the oldest trust company in Texas. Houston would become his permanent home—and a launch pad for his career and his passions.

The *Houston Chronicle* once characterized him as “a brilliant young banker with the skin of a rhinoceros.” During his tenure at what would later become Houston's Bank of America, trust footings rose from \$200 million to \$13 billion. Britt would go on to lead the Trust Department, where he was able to build some of his most valued relationships, particularly with those on his own team. His talents earned him a place in centers of influence, where he was able to direct his energy to philanthropic endeavors.

He was privileged to serve as the cultural committee chairman of the greater Houston Chamber of Commerce, predecessor of the Houston Partnership, where he was instrumental in spinning off the arts support function of the chamber to the Cultural Arts Council of Houston. Now known as the Houston Arts Alliance, it has infused well over \$100 million to the arts.

With financial support from the Knox Foundation, he and his team worked

tirelessly to secure Henry Moore's Large Spindle Piece for Tranquility Park. For seven years, he ran a sustained public fundraising initiative to build the Houston Police Officers Memorial, designed by Jesús Bautista Moroles. He served as chairman of the first two Houston Festivals and was honored by the City of Houston with two separate Britt Davis Days.

In the 1980s, his lecture series on cultural financing for the American Councils for the Arts earned him the unanimous recommendation to President Ronald Reagan for appointment to the governing board of the National Endowment for the Arts—along with a listing in *Who's Who in America*. “Right there under Bette Davis,” he often joked.

As a resident of Houston, and later Katy, he was immersed in the evolution of city and county government, including the races for the 18th Congressional District. He proudly brought diversity to the staff of the trust department—and to the Boards of the Houston Area Salvation Army and Sheltering Arms—to make a lasting impact on the community.

Britt retired from his position as Executive Vice President and Regional Trust Executive in 1992. But there was no slowing down for the man who did 50 pullups and three miles of lunges daily while also serving as an expert witness in fiduciary litigation.

Into his nineties, Britt remained active with Memorial Drive United Methodist Church, volunteering for singalongs at retirement homes and memory care facilities. For many years, he contracted with Houston area nonprofit ARTreach to deliver his singalongs to community centers, assisted living, and memory care facilities. His Memory Makers Singalongs™ songbooks were used as references in national neuroscience studies on the effects of group singing on the aging brain.

From parties and dances to Navy NCO clubs in Japan, playing piano was his joyous throughline. Establishing a beloved Christmas tradition, he would organize family singalongs, which included “A Child’s Carol,” a song he composed and copyrighted for his first granddaughter. Three generations of children will cherish their memories of sitting beneath the Baldwin grand piano while he played everything from Mozart to Elmo’s Song. A beloved husband, father, grandfather, great-grandfather and friend, he always made a point of telling those he loved how important they were to him. His ability to connect with everyone in the moment was a unique gift that created so much happiness.

His love for music, art, and community defined his life, and his impact will continue to resonate through the melodies he set and the art he championed. While he will be profoundly missed and fondly remembered by those whose lives he touched, his song lives on.

Britt Davis is preceded in death by his son, Collin Horne Davis. He is survived by his wife of 70 years, Mary Alice Horne Davis; son Britt Key Davis and his former spouse, Dr. Sue Ellen Richardson; daughter Anne Caroline (Davis) Campbell and spouse Robert Campbell; grandchildren Gabriella Garza Davis, Britt Richardson Davis, Sue Anne Richardson Davis, Sarah Caroline Campbell and Collin Edwin Campbell; great-grandchild Colton Davis Askew; and beloved cousin Cathy McDowra.

A memorial service to celebrate Britt's life will be held Saturday, April 26, 2025 at 1:00 p.m. at Memorial Drive United Methodist Church, 12955 Memorial Dr. Houston, TX 77079; reception to immediately follow in Friendship Court. In lieu of flowers, please consider a charitable donation to The Trevor Project or the Memorial Drive United Methodist Church’s Caring Forever Foundation.

The epigraph on his tombstone at Glenwood Cemetery reads “He set our lives to music.”

Previous Events

Memorial Service

APR **26**. 1:00 PM (CT)

Memorial Drive United Methodist Church
12955 Memorial Drive
Houston, TX
<http://www.mdumc.org>

Tribute Wall

BB

“ Those of us who knew Mr. Davis at the Bank saw him as a towering figure in our experience. He was a friend to all of us, a mentor to many and a great gentleman to work for in addition to all his outside interests. He was always interested in what you were working on and if you asked; he was very excited to offer you guidance on your next steps.

I will always remember his reaction to difficult problems. He was calm when the situations got to be really tough but he never lost his perspective or inimitable sense of humor. He will be greatly missed and fondly remembered by all those who knew him.

I am sure that the Lord is glad to have Britt's piano expertise in the Celestial Band.

I pray that God will continue to hold you up in his loving hands.

Bob Biehl - May 04, 2025 at 04:58 PM

PR

“ I have always known "Britt" as Duane, because that is what my mother, his cousin Neva called him. Mom told me many stories illustrating their fondness for each other throughout their lives. Neva is now 97 and living in Austin. I will read Britt's obituary to her tomorrow and we will observe a time of remembrance for this great man. Our love goes out to Mary Alice at this sad time. - Patti Prewitt Rossman

Patti Prewitt Rossman - April 25, 2025 at 11:53 PM

RC

Hello cousin. I was reviewing our family tree and looked up Britt. I'm sad to see he has passed and your Mom as well. We all lost touch when the families left Red River county and our agrarian past to pursue education or war. I have amassed quite a bit of genealogy if you're interested. Peace be with you. Bobbycrain@aol.com

ROBERT EDWIN CRAIN - February 21 at 02:31 PM



“ 53 files added to the album *Life Tributes*



Dettling Funeral Home - April 24, 2025 at 12:54 PM



“ 6 files added to the album *Life Tributes*



Dettling Funeral Home - April 24, 2025 at 11:43 AM



LS

“ How special Duane and Mary Alice have been to me. Mary and I were sorority sisters at UNT and Duane was in the Navy. He would come home on leave and come to one of our Spring galas where everyone looked forward to seeing he and Mary on the dance floor. They were spectacular. Mary was the first babysitter for me when my oldest son Steve was born. I have visited them on several occasions in their lovely home in Katy. We will all miss him and his great sense of humor, his undying love for others and, of course, his beautiful piano talents. My thoughts and prayers are with the Davis' family.

Lavonne Lewis Stewart

Lavonne Stewart - March 16, 2025 at 12:48 PM

SL

“  How many Sunday mornings have I enjoyed worshipping with Britt, Mary Alice and BK? Years of Sundays. Too many to count. The song Britt often played for my Dad was “Mares Eat Oats & Does Eat Oats & Little Lambs Eat Ivy.” It was a favorite whimsical ditty my dad would sing to me and my sister when we were children. After my Dad passed, Britt often played a few bars of the song when my mother and I walked into the Bridgebuilder Classroom. Hearing Britt play that little nonsensical song was a special gift. Britt's way of wrapping his arms around you with love and remembrance of his bond of friendship with our family. 

Sanda Sanderson Launey and family

Sanda Launey - March 12, 2025 at 07:59 PM