

Thurmond, in 1997, described Abernathy as having "excellent leadership skills and a quick intellect."

But up until his death, Abernathy never referred to Thurmond by his first name. He always called him "the senator," Duncan said.

Abernathy was one of nine children who grew up during the Depression in the family's home on Edwards Avenue, where they would walk to Southside Baptist Church each Sunday. The Spartanburg High graduate attended several area colleges, and was drafted into the Army during World War II. He would later join the Army Reserves and retire a colonel.

Attorney John B. White Jr., whose family has been long-time friends with the Abernathys, called Warren, "a distinct individual who was gifted at approaching people, reading people and dealing with people. And he dealt with them with wisdom, kindness, humor, passion and encouragement."

He added: "One of the most important lessons I learned from Mr. Abernathy was loyalty. He was an individual who . . . I don't want to say he demanded loyalty, but he certainly expected loyalty from the people who were lucky enough to say they were friends of his. His word was his bond."

Abernathy died early Monday at Spartanburg Regional Medical Center, after battling pneumonia and a heart attack on June 15.

A VERY SELF-EFFACING INDIVIDUAL

Abernathy developed a talent and a reputation for being politically savvy and offering sound judgment.

"Many people who were seeking higher office over the years asked his opinion about their chances," said former S.C. Republican Party Chairman Barry Wynn of Spartanburg. "The General Assembly, when legislation was being considered, trusted his judgment and considered his opinions . . . His influence was making sure people considered the facts and looked at the consequences of what they were doing, whether it was legislative or judicial appointments."

But Abernathy never overestimated his political power—he once told his daughter he didn't have power, "just a few good friends"—and, by all accounts, always remained wholly loyal to Thurmond. The number listed in the phone book for the senator's office in Spartanburg was Abernathy's home.

"The reason Strom Thurmond was so popular was because of constituent services, and Warren was the key constituent person in this part of the state," said former Congresswoman Liz Patterson, whose father, Olin Johnson, defeated Thurmond in a 1950 Senate race.

Several people interviewed for this article said Abernathy was able to recognize opportunities for South Carolina, form a consensus about how to approach them, and then, with the help of Thurmond's seniority, get things done.

Wynn said Abernathy shares in Thurmond's legacy.

Thurmond ran unsuccessfully for president on a segregationist platform in 1948, but later changed his view on race—though he never publicly apologized for it. Thurmond was the first Southern senator to hire a senior black aide—Thomas Moss of Orangeburg—and he eventually would support making Martin Luther King Jr. Day a federal holiday.

"There's two chapters in Strom Thurmond's life, and in that second chapter, Senator Thurmond really reached out to the minority community and did everything he could to repair any ill will—and I think Warren Abernathy was a big part of that second chapter," Wynn said.

Former U.S. Commerce Secretary Fred Dent of Spartanburg added, "I don't know

that any outsider knew how he contributed to the senator. He was not the kind to brag that he had done this or that. He gave advice to the senator, and that was it. He was a very self-effacing individual and was extremely well versed in political issues."

A STROM THURMOND INDEPENDENT

Thurmond, Abernathy and Moss together determined that they would make amends for the past, Duncan said.

"Daddy encouraged him (Thurmond). That was his way of trying to help the senator bring the state together," she said. "They probably decided it together, because they did everything together. They were each other's confidant."

Abernathy, however, was more than just the man behind the senator.

Ernest Finney, the first black chief justice of the S.C. Supreme Court, said Abernathy was one of the people he met with when seeking that position. He called Abernathy the "doorkeeper" for Thurmond.

"He was straightforward. He looked you in the eye. He talked to you," Finney said. "He didn't give you a song and dance."

State Sen. John Courson, a Richland County Republican who will be pallbearer at Abernathy's funeral, met Abernathy in 1972. Over time, their relationship grew to the point where they'd meet weekly over lunch or dinner.

"He talked in riddles," Courson said. "I remember, when Lee Atwater had gone to work for President Reagan, we were having these lunches and dinners and (Abernathy) would say things like, 'the pool-hall crowd says this.' I thought, this guy is a devout Southern Baptist. Why is he talking about the pool-hall crowd? Lee explained that was a euphemism for the man-on-the-street. It took me awhile to learn the nuances of his English."

Courson said he last talked with Abernathy less than two weeks ago. Abernathy always liked to hear the latest Columbia gossip, and the two mused on the upcoming gubernatorial and Senate races. Courson said Abernathy was "like a second father."

"Honestly, I still don't know whether he was a Democrat or Republican," he said. "I think Warren Abernathy was a Strom Thurmond Independent."

NEVER CHEAT THE WORLD

Despite the politics, the people who knew Abernathy best concentrated Monday on his spirit of camaraderie, his devotion to his church and his words of wisdom.

For more than 50 years, the Whites and Abernathys have held annual Christmas breakfasts. In 2007, the firm sponsoring the event sent out just more than 3,000 invitations.

Abernathy enjoyed spending Saturday mornings at Ike's Korner Grille. When he got too old to drive, friends would come by and pick him up.

And throughout his life, he made financial contributions to churches, schools and other organizations often, if not exclusively, to be used to help those less fortunate.

"He always said to me, whenever he gave me money, 'Never cheat the world.' How about that? And he always told me, 'The world is round . . . anything you do will come back around,'" Duncan said.

Funeral services are scheduled for 2 p.m. Wednesday at Southside Baptist Church, and burial with military honors will follow in Greenlawn Memorial Gardens.

Former state Supreme Court Justice E.C. Burnett, a Spartanburg native, said he learned the value of patience and to not take things at face value from Abernathy.

"He was a man who loved South Carolina and loved this country like few in today's politics. That's a very brazen thing to say.

But I say it unreservedly. There will never be another Warren Abernathy. He will be greatly missed."

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. LYNN A. WESTMORELAND

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 23, 2009

Mr. WESTMORELAND. Madam Speaker, on June 19, 2009 I attended the grand opening of the National Infantry Museum located on Fort Benning Army Installation, Georgia. As a result, I missed a number of votes. Had I been present, I would have voted the following:

"No" on providing for consideration of H.R. 2918, making appropriations for the Legislative Branch FY 2010. (rollcall No. 409)

"No" on Agreeing to the Resolution providing for consideration of H.R. 2918, making appropriations for the Legislative Branch FY 2010. (rollcall No. 410)

"Aye" on Motion to Suspend the Rules and Agree to expressing support for all Iranian citizens who embrace the values of freedom, human rights, civil liberties, and rule of law, and for other purposes. (rollcall No. 411)

"Aye" on Motion to Recommit with Instructions Making appropriations for the Legislative Branch FY 2010. (rollcall No. 412)

"No" on Passage making appropriations for the Legislative Branch FY 2010. (rollcall No. 413)

"Present" on Quorum Call of the House. (rollcall No. 414)

"Aye" on Article I impeaching Samuel B. Kent, judge of the United States District Court for the Southern District of Texas, for high crimes and misdemeanors. (rollcall No. 415)

"Aye" on Article II impeaching Samuel B. Kent, judge of the United States District Court for the Southern District of Texas, for high crimes and misdemeanors. (rollcall No. 416)

"Aye" on Article III impeaching Samuel B. Kent, judge of the United States District Court for the Southern District of Texas, for high crimes and misdemeanors. (rollcall No. 417)

"Aye" on Article IV impeaching Samuel B. Kent, judge of the United States District Court for the Southern District of Texas, for high crimes and misdemeanors. (rollcall No. 418)

TRIBUTE TO UNITED STATES COAST GUARD AUXILIARY 70TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. DAVE CAMP

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 23, 2009

Mr. CAMP. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary to commemorate the 70th anniversary since its establishment on June 23, 1939.

On June 23, 1939, Congress established the Coast Guard Reserve, later known as the Coast Guard Auxiliary, to promote boating safety and to facilitate Coast Guard operations. Beginning in 1942, they became the core of the Temporary Reserve and over 50,000 Auxiliarists performed coastal defense and search rescue duties and patrolled