

Obituary: David L. Jester

October 28, 2024

David Linville Jester, former president of Wayland Baptist University, died at his home in Paris, Ky., on Oct. 14. He was 94. He was born March 5, 1930, in Tanganyika—now Tanzania—in East Africa to missionary parents William and Daisy Hicks Jester. He grew up on the southern shores of Lake Victoria. At age 6, he left Tanzania to attend Rift Valley Academy in Kijabe, Kenya. After high school in Louisville, Ky., he received a scholarship to Georgetown College in Kentucky, where he participated in intramural sports and was president of the student body. In 1951, he graduated and married Marie Jean Hans. He went on to complete his Bachelor of Divinity and Master of Divinity degrees at Southern Seminary in Louisville, followed by a Master of Arts and Doctor of Education at Teacher's College of Columbia University. In 1957, David and Marie Jester were appointed by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board to Iwo Baptist College in Iwo, Nigeria. He worked in graduate studies at University of Ibadan, was president of Niger Baptist College and founder of the School of Basic Studies at Ahmadu Bello University. Upon returning to the states in 1970, Jester served as academic vice president of Campbellsville University. In 1975, he started the graduate program at Georgetown College. In 1981, he became the ninth president of Wayland Baptist College in Plainview. He led WBU from 1981 to 1987, a time in which the school transitioned from a college to a four-year university and established external campuses in San Antonio and El Paso, as well as New Mexico, Hawaii and Alaska. Donna Hedgepath, current president of Wayland Baptist University said of Jester, "His legacy of faith and dedication to higher education has left an indelible mark on the lives he touched." After leaving Wayland in 1987, Jester



continued his career in social and educational programs at Central Texas College and was instrumental in changing the status from an institute to a college known as Texas State Technical College. He also worked at South Texas College. In 1997, Jester became chancellor and president of Mid-Continent University in Mayfield, Ky., where he served until 2002 and was later named chancellor emeritus. Upon retirement, he remained active in Louisville at Hurstbourne Baptist Church as a Sunday school teacher and deacon, and he was president of two boards as well as president of Hillcrest Baptist Camp in Illinois. He is survived by his wife, Marie Hans Jester; daughters Lisa and husband Scott Brumley; daughter Daneta and husband David Sylvester; daughter Karina and husband John Deaver; three grandchildren; and three great-grandsons, along with extended family. Memorial gifts can be made to The Dr. David L. and Marie Hans Jester Endowed Social Work Scholarship at Wayland Baptist University at www.WBU.edu, Nigeria Faithful Works Charity at www.nigeriafaithful.org, or Rift Valley Academy Giving page at www.RVA.org.