

Lynn Craft, longtime Baptist Foundation of Texas president, dies

June 2, 2016

Lynn Craft, who led the Baptist Foundation of Texas—now [HighGround Advisors](#)—more than three and a half decades, died May 31. He was 73. A Dallas native, Craft graduated from W.W. Samuel High School in 1960, received his undergraduate degree in accounting from Baylor University in 1965, and his master of business administration degree in banking and finance from Southern Methodist University in 1970.

He also received honorary doctorates from Hardin-Simmons University, East Texas Baptist University and Dallas Baptist University.

Craft grew up attending First Baptist Church in Dallas and later was a member at Park Cities Baptist Church and most recently First Baptist Church in Athens.

He served each of those congregations as a Sunday school teacher and deacon.



As longtime president and CEO of the Baptist Foundation of Texas, Lynn Craft worked closely with BGCT Executive Director Bill Pinson and other agency executives. Two mentors from his youth at First Baptist in Dallas, James Cantrell and Martin Lovvorn, inspired and encouraged him to attend Baylor on a scholarship privately funded by Cantrell, president of the Baptist Foundation of Texas. Friends and family agreed he spent the rest of his life sharing that same kindness and generosity with others.

Craft served in the U.S. Coast Guard after graduating from Baylor. During this time, he and Becky Roberts married and began to build their family.

He started his career as an accountant and later was persuaded by Cantrell to join the Baptist Foundation of Texas, where he worked 44 years, including 37 years as president and chief executive officer.

“Lynn Craft ably served Texas Baptist institutions through his 44 years of work at Baptist Foundation of Texas,” noted Craft’s successor, Jeff Smith, president of HighGround Advisors. “His leadership undergirded the financial stability and viability of our Baptist institutions as he sought to bring sound business practices to the management of endowment and split-interest dollars.

“He was the consummate deal maker, especially deals involving real estate,

always striving to accomplish the goal. He left his mark on the institution and those we served.”



Lynn Craft with evangelist Billy Graham. Craft ranks among the longest-tenured Texas Baptist agency heads in history, second only to R.C. Buckner, who served 40 years as founding president of what is now Buckner International. During Craft’s time as president and CEO, the foundation’s assets under management grew from \$123 million to \$1.5 billion.

Through the years, Craft earned a reputation among Baptist agency executives as a trusted confidante and adviser, whether they had questions about making a real estate deal or accepting a donated piece of property.



Lynn Craft enjoyed working with Baptist business leaders and donor such as A. Webb Roberts. He received numerous honors and accolades throughout his years as a Baptist leader and respected businessman. He served on the board of directors for numerous banks, funds, corporations and foundations, giving of his time and wisdom, immensely enjoying those positions and his relationships with his colleagues.

When not “doing a deal,” Craft enjoyed traveling with his wife of 50 years, fishing, spending time on Cedar Creek Lake or—most important to him—visiting his children and grandchildren.

Craft is survived by his wife, Becky; children, Cara Marriott and Hunter Craft; grandchildren, Hank, Drew and Claire Marriott and Carson and Campbell Craft; and siblings, James and Carol Craft. He was preceded in death by his parents, Herbert and Evelyn Craft, and his brother, Charles Craft.

A celebration of his life will be held at 2 p.m., June 4, at First Baptist Church in Dallas, with a reception following. In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations to the [Visiting Nurses Association of Texas](#).