



Earnest Lee Duckworth

August 5, 1949 - August 25, 2026

Meridian, Mississippi

Earnest Lee Duckworth died in Meridian on August 25, 2026. He was seventy-seven. Born there on August 5, 1949, he grew up knowing the railroad as a clock and a weather report. His father worked a switch. Earnest learned that a waybill is a promise: it holds, or the whole story comes apart in the dark.

For thirty-four years he was a clerk in a yard office that did not look like the brochures. He arrived early. He did not advertise. Agents called him because he would write up a bad car even when the train was already called. He charged a fair hour on the side when a church van needed a lift more than a sermon. He kept a notebook of trains, not clients. The notebook had grease on the edges.

He married Imogene Duckworth in 1971. They raised three children in a frame house that needed a new porch every twenty years. Imogene kept the garden and the choir. Earnest grilled on Sundays and considered a plate of smoked chicken a seasonal obligation. After his knees quit the worst platforms he still came out for a favorite string of hoppers, moving slower, doing the same honest work.

Friends remember a man who wiped his hands before he shook yours, who could stand in a noise without making it a personality, and who left a desk cleaner than he found it. He loved the river at evening, a glass of tea he did not finish, and the sound of a train that had decided to live. He died in Meridian, in the city whose yards had written his calendar. The hump still works. Someone else will hear the knock that means trouble.

Services

Visitation in Meridian, then a simple service. A gift to a rail-workers' assistance fund or a neighborhood pantry is welcome.

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