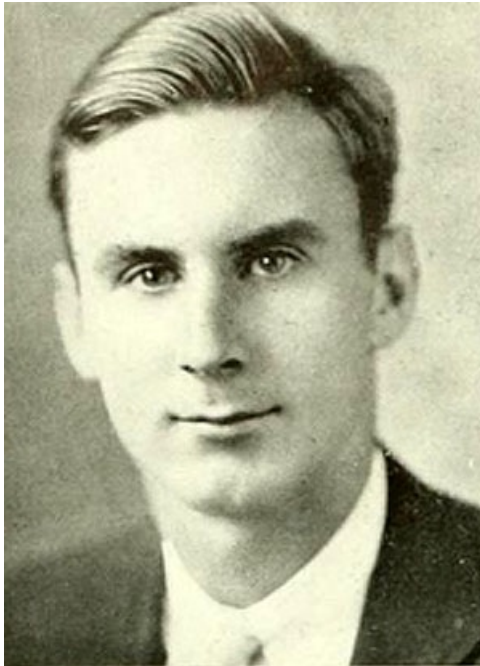


Ruth, Earl Baker ^[1]

Ruth, Earl Baker

by William S. Powell, 1994

7 Feb. 1916–15 Aug. 1989



Senior portrait of Earl Baker Ruth, from the 1938 University of North Carolina yearbook *Yackety Yack*, Volume XLVIII. Published 1938 by the Carolina Publications Union, Chapel Hill, N.C.

^[2]

Earl Baker Ruth, congressman, college professor, and governor of Samoa, was born in Spencer, the son of Earl Monroe and Marian Beatrice Baker Ruth; he spent his youth in [Charlotte](#) ^[3]. In 1938 he was graduated from [The University of North Carolina](#) ^[4], where he was an all-conference basketball player and where he received the M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in 1942 and 1955, respectively. Between 1942 and 1945 he served as an ensign and then a lieutenant in the U.S. Navy. After [World War II](#) ^[5] he was mayor pro tem of Salisbury and a city councilman for three terms. A member of the [Catawba College](#) ^[6] faculty for twenty-two years, he became chairman of the Department of Physical Education and dean of students.

Having found the [Rowan County](#) ^[7] voter registration book closed before he chose to change his party affiliation and run for Congress, Ruth secured a landmark decision from the State Board of Elections. A signed agreement to change his registration from [Democrat](#) ^[8] to [Republican](#) ^[9] as soon as the books reopened was accepted, and he was permitted to file as a Republican candidate for Congress. He was elected in 1968 and reelected for two succeeding terms, serving until 1974, when he was defeated. A highly respected conservative, he served on the House appropriations, veterans affairs, education, and labor committees.

In 1975 [President Gerald Ford](#) ^[10] appointed Ruth governor of [American Samoa](#) ^[11]. Ruth and Ford had become acquainted when both were in Chapel Hill as young naval officers during World War II. He remained on Samoa until President Ford was defeated for reelection.

A [Presbyterian](#) ^[12], Ruth died at his home in Salisbury following a yearlong battle with cancer. He was survived by his wife, the former Jane Wiley of Charlotte, and four children: Billie Jane, Earle Wiley, Marian Ann, and Jacqueline Dell.

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Additional Resources:

[Earl B. Ruth, head-and-shoulders portrait, facing front] / Anton, Wash., D.C. Photograph. Congressional Portrait Collection, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Divisio. <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/99403041/> [14] (accessed August 31, 2014).

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