

WORTH M. HELMS, JR.



Worth M. Helms, Jr. was born October 13, 1942, in Charlotte, NC. His parents homesteaded a ten-acre tract in 1938 with fruit trees, a large garden, chickens and eventually two horses. His childhood was spent helping to build fences and performing many other chores around the homeplace, the experience to which he attributed his eventual work ethic. He attended St John's Baptist

Church, was active in the youth group, and sang in the senior high choir.

Putting high value on a lifelong education, he left Charlotte in 1961 to attend The University of North Carolina to obtain a BS degree in industrial management. Following his father's example, he paid his own way through school with the exception of \$400 from his parents the first year. He held a number of summer jobs during college, among them jobs in Charlotte, NC, Lake Tahoe, Nevada, and Walla Walla, Washington. He hitchhiked from Seattle, Washington to return to school in 1963. In 1966, he enlisted in the U.S. Army Signal Corps, obtaining his 2nd lieutenant bars in 1967. He served for three years and four months with 18 months in Viet Nam and was discharged honorably as a 1st Lieutenant in 1969.

Returning to UNC, he acquired an MBA in Operations Research in 1971, and accepted a position with Springs Mills. In 1971 he married Evelyn Moore and they had one adored son, Worth III. Worth III is married to Cameron and they have two wonderful children, Worth IV and Lily. Worth and Evelyn parted in 1978.

In 1976, he left Springs Mills and moved with his family to Pittsburgh, PA to enter the life insurance business with Northwestern Mutual. After acquiring two professional certifications, in 1982 he became president of The Todd Organization of Pittsburgh, PA, an independent executive benefit planning and administration company, from which he retired in 1992.

Along the way, Worth served on a number of non-profit charitable boards, among them the Metropolitan YMCA of Pittsburgh, Golden Triangle YMCA, Baptist Homes, Baptist Homes Foundation, AB University, AB Foundation, DDAN, BBB, Education Partnership, Goodwill, CEED Trust, Toastmasters of South Carolina, Dawn Patrol Toastmasters Club, Orphaned Heart Ministries, HOPE, Mt Lebanon Baptist Child Care Center, and his wife Janet's musical performances. On some boards he served as long as 35 years and was president of five of them. 47 years ago he started The Dawn Patrol Toastmasters Club which is still in existence and has hosted over 500 members.

In 1993, after retirement, Worth attended Duquesne University and acquired a Masters in Counseling in 1995. He and Janet Mouganis married in 1996, and in 1997, they went on a photo safari to Botswana and fell in love with Africa. The trip included rafting the Zambezi River and an ultralight flight over Victoria Falls. In 1999 they returned to Uganda on a mission trip and began the rest of their life's work. Worth co-founded a non-profit (CEED Trust) which planted a coffee farm, using its profits to dig water wells. CEED has now dug over 1000 wells for 1,200,000 people to have clean water. Disease has declined an average of 71% in those population centers in which CEED dug wells. With an Anglican priest, Janet started a Christian school in northern Kenya which now has 500 students, many of whom now attend college. She also began a mission to heal orphaned hearts which has touched thousands of people.

In 2001, they attempted to adopt a 7 year-old Ugandan girl, Olive. Failing in this, they sent her to boarding school in Kampala, Uganda, and were successful in bringing her to the US for college. Obtaining her degree, she met and married Matthew Gocinski and resides in Pittsburgh, PA.

Worth wrote three books, *A Foundation for Life- A Grandfather's Wisdom*, *A Letter From God*, and *A Marriage Odyssey*. All are available on Amazon.

In 2018 Worth's last educational milestone was reached when he was awarded an honorary doctorate by AB University.

Worth always expressed astonishment at the path of his life and gave credit to God for having blessed him with so many gifts and experiences. He counted his failures and bad decisions as stepping-stones to later successes and good decisions. He left this Earth believing a brighter path was opening ahead and believed that his future contained an even closer relationship with God. *Gloria in excelsis Deo!*

Worth was predeceased in death by his father, Worth M. Helms, Sr.; and his mother, Nancy Kendrick Helms. He is survived by his son, Worth III (Cameron); his daughter, Olive Gocinski (Matthew); sister Carolyn H. Wyland; and his adored grandchildren, Worth IV and Lily Braxton.

A private family burial will take place at the Western Carolina State Veterans Cemetery, located in the beautiful mountains of NC, on Wednesday, June 26, 2024. A Celebration of Life service will be held at First United Methodist Church, Gastonia, NC, on Saturday, July 13, 2024 at 11:00 am. Another Celebration of Life service will be held at Church of the Ascension in Pittsburgh, PA on Saturday, July 27, at 11:00 am.

In lieu of flowers, please consider directing gifts to The Christian East Africa and Economic development Fund (CEED) in Sewickley, PA. www.ceed-trust.org.

MCLEAN FUNERAL DIRECTORS GASTONIA is serving the Helms family. Condolence messages may be left at

www.mcleanfuneral.com.

Send condolences post-gazette.com/gb