

V. DALE THURSTON

May 21, 1926 - December 24, 2024



98 years old.

Born on May 21, 1926, in Henry County, Ohio, to Charles Gilbert and Mary Pearl Thurston, Vinal Dale Thurston lived a remarkable life of faith, love and service.

Dale grew up on the family farm before joining the World War II V-12 program, an opportunity that provided for him an education and the adventure of a lifetime. Through this program, Dale matriculated from Yale

University at age 19 on February 22, 1946, with a degree in Electrical Engineering.

Following his graduation, Dale served as an active-duty Naval officer and then in the Naval Reserve until his retirement in 1973. With unwavering dedication to his country, he carried the honor of his military service with quiet pride.

On May 20, 1949, Dale married the first love of his life, Erma Grace (Jenkins), an accomplished vocalist, and together they raised their brood of four children - Chuck, Dale Ann, Jan and Sharon.

Dale's professional career with Westinghouse spanned more than 50 years. Beginning as an appliance engineer, ultimately, he became Director of Licensee Services Eastern World. For Westinghouse, he traveled to Australia, Egypt, Japan, Pakistan, and Brazil where Erma delighted listeners with her enchanting voice. Wherever he went, Dale carried the Gospel, offering Gideon Bibles to relatives, friends, prisoners, and young soldiers departing for military service.

A deeply devoted follower of Christ, Dale lived his faith. An enthusiastic supporter of mission work, he journeyed to Nicaragua and Haiti. He financed countless children's experience of God's love through church camps. Dale found a spiritual home in every church he joined, becoming a steadfast supporter of Evangelism Explosion and a leader in each congregation. In his later years he served in the cherished role of Chaplain for The Gideons International.

After Erma died in 2000, Dale eventually moved to Sherwood Oaks in Cranberry Township, Pennsylvania. There he found the second love of his life, his "Sweetie," Sheila Stepp. They were united in Holy Matrimony in the eyes of God on September 7, 2019.

Dale will be remembered for his ready wit, wisdom, and passion for sharing the Gospel. Whether offering a cheerful spoonerism ("Prinderella and the Cince"), distributing a pocket New Testament, or encouraging people through prayer, Dale's life testified to God's Love through Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.

As one of Dale's favorite poems, Thanatopsis, reminds us:

"So live, that when thy summons comes to join

The innumerable caravan, which moves

To that mysterious realm...

Thou go not... scourged to a dungeon, but...

Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch

About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams."

Dale Thurston approached his final rest with unfaltering trust in God, leaving a legacy of faith, love, and service.

Dale is survived by his blessed wife, Sheila Stepp; his daughter-in-law, Mary Therese Martin Thurston, Chuck's widow; his daughters, Dale Ann Gray (Gary Eugene Gray), Jan Ellen Sommer (Matthew David Sommer), and Sharon Kay Bonavoglia (Arthur Eugene Bonavoglia); his grandchildren, Andrew Martin Thurston, Seth David Gray (Alaina Lucy Shearer), Benjamin Daniel Gray (Janie Elizabeth Jacoby), Nathanael Paul Gray, Adam Joseph Gray (Cristine Serrone Gray), Sarah Elisabeth Gray, Luke Andrew Sommer, Caleb Thurston Sommer (Alyxandra Ann Sommer), Rachel Grace Sommer, Mark Andrew David Williams (Courtney Brooke Williams), Jonathan Caleb Kenneth Williams, and Emily Grace Bonavoglia (Graham Gelzhiser); and great-grandchildren, Lily Braeden Gray, Cohen Samson Gray, Benjamin Ezra Shearer, Foster Raymond Gray, Madison Doon Gray, Rivers Patrick Gray, Renwick Foley Gray, Evander Rain Gray, Samara Jane Williams, Ezra Canaan Williams, and Orion Adaiah Williams.

Dale is also survived by his brothers, Carroll Lee Thurston (Marilyn Louise) and Lowell Edward Thurston; brothers-in-law, Jerry Bruce Hissong (Abbie) and Dale Dwight Walther (Joyce Nelson); and a myriad of nieces, nephews and great-nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by his beloved wife, Erma Grace Jenkins Thurston; his son, Charles Jenkins Thurston; grandson, Charles David Thurston; granddaughter, Sarah Doon Foley Gray; his sisters, Gloria Elaine Hissong and Laurane Elizabeth Walther; and his sister-in-law, Linda Lou Thurston, wife of his brother Lowell.

Such is the result of a full quiver and a long life.

In lieu of flowers, thank you for considering a contribution to Gideons International at <https://shorturl.at/4KGII>. Arrangements have been concluded by **SIMONS FUNERAL HOME, INC.**

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