



Dr. Thomas Darwin Milligan

June 8, 1928 - December 3, 2020

LAKELAND - Dr. Thomas Darwin Milligan of Lakeland passed away on Dec. 3 at the age of 92.

Darwin was born on June 8, 1928, in Murfreesboro, TN, the oldest of five children to William Delta and Tommie Lee Milligan.

Raised during the Great Depression, he grew up on a farm in a faith-centered family that worshipped at Ward's Grove Baptist Church near Murfreesboro.

Darwin trusted his life to Jesus at an early age.

He centered his entire life around faith, family and Christian values.

Darwin was married for 68 years to Barbara Milligan, who died in 2017. Both attained doctorate degrees at George Peabody College at Vanderbilt University.

He believed in the power of education.

Darwin and Barbara had five children, 19 grandchildren and 17 great-grandchildren.

The family moved from Murfreesboro in 1963 to Lakeland, where he joined the faculty at Florida Southern College

Darwin and Barbara were happiest spending time with their family, always hosting more than 50 of their children and spouses, grandchildren and great-grandchildren from around the nation for Christmas in Lakeland.

For more than 50 years, Darwin and Barbara were members at First Baptist Church at the Mall, where he taught the men's Angler Sunday School class for 20 years at the original church campus on North Florida Avenue.

He enjoyed being a member of the Lakeland Rotary Club and attended regularly. He was a recipient of the Paul Harris Fellow Award.

Both Darwin and Barbara were educators, teachers in elementary school, junior high and high school, and as college professors.

Graduating at Kittrell High School, where he would later become principal, he went on to receive a B.A. degree in chemistry and mathematics at Cumberland University in Lebanon, TN.

Following his undergraduate degree, he went to The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., to train as a Baptist minister and received a Master of Divinity degree. He pastored five Baptist churches in Middle Tennessee during his early career before becoming an educator in the early 1960s.

He earned a Masters degree in education and sociology at Middle Tennessee State University, followed by the PhD at Peabody to complete his education.

Granddaddy, as he was most often called, is survived by five children and spouses: Delwin (Kathey) Milligan of Bartow, FL; Dana (Rusty) Hedges of Tullahoma, TN; Devonne (O.P.) Cooper of Rising Fawn, GA; Dale Milligan of West Palm Beach, FL; and Deric (Maitreya) Milligan of Pisgah Forest, NC; as well as sisters Annette Mehta of Murfreesboro and Nancy (Roger) Hines of Kennesaw, GA.

Surviving grandchildren are Audra (Manu) Samnotra, Austin (Martha) Milligan and Allen (Lara) Milligan; Aaron (Allison) Hedges, Barrett (Twyla) Hedges, Cara (Andrew) Best and Corbin (A.J.) Hedges; Bonnie (Michael) Chappell, Lanta (Matt) Carroll, William Cooper and Caroline (Ryan) Archer; Dillon Padgett, Gabriella (Jeffery) Moffitt, Meredith (Carl) Roberts, Katherine Padgett and Preston Padgett; and Ashlea, Luke and Rebecca Milligan.

Surviving great-grandchildren are Ella Claire, Jackson and Barrett Milligan, Emily Milligan and Leela Samnotra; Stella, Teddy and Jack Hedges, Julian Best and Zion Hedges; Andrew, Lucy and Lena Chappell, Riley Carroll, Rebekah and Thomas Archer; and John Allen Moffitt.

Darwin was predeceased by his parents; sisters Elaine (Charles) Johnson and

Rachel Milligan Harris; and daughter-in-law Kristen Milligan.

The memorial service and burial will be at Ward's Grove in late spring.

Memorial gifts honoring Dr. Milligan's legacy can kindly be made to Inheritance of Hope, a nonprofit charity founded by Kristen and Deric Milligan that serves families facing the loss of a parent: www.InheritanceOfHope.org. Or, P.O. Box 90, Pisgah Forest, NC 28768.

Tribute Wall

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“ *My fellow Rotarian we will miss you. I would try to sit with him at our meetings so we could talk, I always enjoyed our conversations. When he got his Paul Harris recognition at his home I was there and so glad to see him receive it. Good by my friend.*

Mark Scolnick, Rotary District Governor 20-21

Mark Scolnick - December 20, 2020 at 01:23 PM

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“ *Dana, Devonne, and Dale- very sorry to hear about your Dad. Wow! What a life he had and what an influence he must have had on his students and teachers. Also sorry to hear about your mother. I saw her at Ms. Haley's retirement party in Lakeland. She was also a very dedicated teacher.*

*God bless,
Jim Parrish
Lake Wales*

Jim Parrish - December 20, 2020 at 09:13 AM