



Donald Owen Thornton

October 14, 1935 - March 31, 2016

Donald O. Thornton
1935 – 2016

Donald (Don) Owen Thornton of Waterwood passed away Thursday, March 31, 2016. A service of celebration will be held at 5:00 p.m. on Thursday, April 7, at Sam Houston Funeral Home, 1700 Normal Park Drive in Huntsville, Texas. In lieu of flowers, those who wish may send a contribution in Don's memory to the Cy-Fair Educational Foundation to provide scholarships for students wishing to pursue a career in education. (CFEF, 11803 Grant Road, Suite 115, Cypress, TX 77429, 281-807-3591)

Don is survived by his soul mate, best friend, and wife of almost 62 years, Dixie; daughters Kathy Risien and Kelly Stewart; son-in-law Willis Stewart; five granddaughters Jenlizbeth, Cassidy, Jessica, Cameron, and Connie; two grandsons Camden and Will; and three great grandsons, Stone, Strake, and Fletcher. Other survivors include Lance, Wart, Palin, his faithful four-legged companions, as well as countless friends.

Donald Thornton was born on October 14, 1935, in Chester, Texas, to Tullos and Inez Thornton. Don's father owned and operated the town's only hardware store (actually a "mini" Wal-Mart), and his mother assisted Tullos wherever and however she could. From them, Don learned conservative values and the critical importance of hard work and saving money. Don attended every level of school in Chester and graduated from the high school where he was involved in as many activities as were available. He was especially interested in sports and played football, basketball, and baseball. He was named an all-star in each of these sports. His classmates consistently voted Don the "Class Favorite."

Following high school graduation, Don attended Lamar University to acquire the credentials needed to become a teacher. He majored in government and history and earned his Bachelor's degree. Later, he earned his Master's degree from Sam Houston State University.

Staying in his native East Texas, Don spent the first years of his teaching and coaching career in Hardin and West Hardin. After a successful launching of his career, Don moved with his family in 1963 to the Cy-Fair area. Cypress-Fairbanks I.S.D. hired him to teach government at the high school. But this assignment lasted just a short while. The superintendent quickly recognized Don's unique talents and leadership abilities and moved him to a central office role after a mere two

years of teaching government at Cy-Fair High School. This promotion marked the beginning of Don's most crucial roles during his 28 years in the district and his lasting legacy to the Cy-Fair Community. In 2014, the 75th Anniversary Committee named Don Thornton as one of the 75 most influential people in the district's history. In honoring Don, the Committee enumerated his many leadership roles in the district – administrative assistant to the superintendent, personnel director, assistant superintendent, deputy superintendent, and superintendent. The Committee also described Don as a foundation builder who created structures, programs, and strategies that still inform district practices today – staffing patterns, team teaching, formats for candidate interviews, and bond studies, to name a few. The ultimate conclusion was that Don Thornton was a creative visionary and the one person most responsible for shaping and molding C.F.I.S.D. to be cutting edge, innovative, and successful. The district honored him as a building namesake with the opening of Thornton Junior High School in 1993 (now called Thornton Middle School). "This influential superintendent is considered by many to be the "architect" of modern-day C.F.I.S.D., as he established processes and cultural norms that subsequent leaders valued and chose to maintain."

When he retired in 1992, Don continued to be drawn to the world of education, so he worked as an adjunct professor at Sam Houston State University, teaching courses on the superintendency and supervising student teachers. Eventually, he settled into retirement and spent his time golfing, RV traveling with Dixie and

their

three furry children, attending their grandchildren's many activities, socializing with

their Waterwood neighbors, and participating in activities at the Point Blank Community Church.

Don Thornton will be dearly missed.

Previous Events

Memorial Service

APR 7. 5:00 PM (CT)

Sam Houston Memorial Funeral Home - Huntsville
1700 Normal Park Dr.
Huntsville, TX 77340
(936) 291-7300
belinda@shmfh.com

Visitation

APR 7. 4:00 PM - 5:00 PM (CT)

Sam Houston Memorial Funeral Home - Huntsville
1700 Normal Park Dr.
Huntsville, TX 77340
(936) 291-7300
belinda@shmfh.com

Reception following service

APR 7 (CT)

Pritchett House of Huntsville
1322 Avenue O
Huntsville, TX

Tribute Wall



“ *Donald Owen Thornton*

November 15, 2022 at 08:33 PM



“ *Donald Thornton and his wife Dixie made a tremendous impact on the lives of students at Hardin High School in the 60s. Their personalities and examples of goodness gave all of us a grounded future. Love, respect, and prayers are being lifted for solace and comfort to all of his family.*

Rita Durham-Barnes - April 07, 2016 at 03:22 PM



“ *Fairest of All was purchased for the family of Donald Owen Thornton.*



April 07, 2016 at 09:32 AM



“ *Dear Dixie,
Donald hired me in January, 1969 for Bane Elementary. He then was responsible for getting me to Matzke. I worked for CyFair 40 years. CyFair was never quite the same after you guys left. That personal touch just wasn't there. Sad loss, but I am like someone else--he and Bubba are probably sharing old times right now. God Bless.
Peggy Evans Phillips*

Peggy Evans Phillips - April 07, 2016 at 09:07 AM

JC

“ Dixie and girls, I was so sorry to hear of your loss. Doesn't seem possible. I just saw Donald at Bubba's funeral. I find comfort is knowing that he and Bill are probably sharing jokes and old stories. Joyce Copeland

Joyce Copeland - April 06, 2016 at 09:48 AM

SH

“ So sorry for your loss. I was at West Hardin when he and Dixie were there and then he hired me to teach at Cy-Fair when I finished college. I worked at Cy-Fair for 12 years when he was Supt. I heard about his passing from some of my Hardin friends. When I returned to my home area, I was principal at Hardin High School where Don had taught. I remember going skiing with them. May God bless you. He was a great guy.

Sharon - April 05, 2016 at 12:39 PM

BB

“ Dixie,
I will miss Don so much. We had some good conversations about San Jacinto County. He was a great guy to talk to. He was understanding when my husband, Weldon, passed away so young.

Barbara Brock.

Barbara Brock - April 04, 2016 at 05:39 PM

YF

“ Your TWHS Family. purchased the Strength & So lace Spray for the family of Donald Owen Thornton.



Your TWHS Family. - April 04, 2016 at 01:24 PM

WS

“ Dixie, Kathy, Kelly, and families,
We are so saddened to learn of Donald's passing. He truly was a great man, and we certainly felt that he was one of our Seamans family members. He often spoke lovingly of you Dixie, and of his two girls. The grandkids were the apple of his eye, and he loved them with all his heart. I know you will miss his terribly, but he is now enjoying those streets of gold with all those that have gone on before.

Love to all,
Waynette Seamans and
entire Seamans family

Waynette Seamans - April 04, 2016 at 08:38 AM

KD

“ Dear Dixie and family,
We were so saddened to hear of Donald's passing. He hired me to work with Robbie Sheridan at Matzke 45 years ago this summer. It was the beginning of a new family in my life and a wonderful career in CyFair. Then I was blessed to be nurtured and encouraged by you, Dixie, as I became an elementary librarian at Lieder in 1985. You and Donald set a standard and encouraged all of us to reach for our best. Thank you. Fond memories will stay with me always. Please accept our sympathy and heartfelt love.

Blessings,
Kris and Chuck Dewees

Kris Dewees - April 03, 2016 at 10:51 PM

JP

“ *Dixie, Kathy and Kelly,*
Don was totally responsible for my obtaining a job with Cy-Fair ISD. We lived down the street from you all in Enchanted Valley and when I applied to Cy-Fair and didn't hear anything about a position when it got to be July, I was going to sign my next year's contract in Spring Branch. I called Don because he knew I had applied for a teaching job and did not want to sign my contract without letting him know as he had encouraged me to apply. He immediately responded that I should NOT sign my contract and to trust him to make sure I had a job in August. So, I did and I was able to spend 25 wonderful years working in Cy-Fair after he guaranteed me a job. He was always such a positive and encouraging person. He will be greatly missed.

*Sincerely,
Joan Spillane Postma*

Joan Postma - April 03, 2016 at 06:16 PM

DM

“ *Dixie, Kathy and Kelly,*

Thinking of each of you and holding you in prayer and thought.

Thank God for the life of Don Thornton and for his beautiful family.

May he now rest in peace.

Dianne and Jim Meyer



Dianne S. Meyer - April 03, 2016 at 01:36 AM



“ *Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Donald Owen Thornton.*



April 01, 2016 at 06:07 PM



“ *We have wonderful memories of Donald - he will be missed by many! Margaret and Dick Evors*

Margaret Evors - April 01, 2016 at 11:57 AM



“ *The news of Don's passing couldn't have been sadder for Barbara and I. Don was a friend from our first day in Waterwood to our last. GOD truly has another good soldier. We will always cherish our memories of Don.*

Wayne and Barbara Mathews

Wayne Mathews - April 01, 2016 at 09:13 AM



“ *Sweetest Sunrise Bouquet was purchased for the family of Donald Owen Thornton.*



April 01, 2016 at 08:35 AM



“ *Sentiments of Serenity Spray* was purchased for the family of *Donald Owen Thornton*.



March 31, 2016 at 08:50 PM