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## T. Gale Thompson remembered as caring professor, friend, father, husband

ETHAN MAY Jul 7, 2016



T. Gale Thompson, with his family, wears a Missouri sweatshirt.

Courtesy photo

COLUMBIA — After spending 35 years sharing knowledge as a professor, Dr. T. Gale Thompson returned home to Missouri, where he regularly shared thoughtful quips with more than 3,600 Facebook friends.

Before he died Sunday, July 3, 2016, the retired psychology professor wrote one final Facebook post in which he asked for previous posts of his to be collected and a post from April 20 to be shared.

“You are living a miracle, a mysterious experience, which you will not experience again, do not make judgments of your own experiences, but just let them be,” he wrote in the April 20 post. “All of life can be a blessing.”

Dr. Thompson was 82.

As word spread about his death, messages flooded the Facebook page for which he was known. Kim Thompson, Dr. Thompson's wife of 48 years, said her husband loved sharing his thoughts there.

“He still felt like he was a professor,” she said.

Among those leaving messages was Laura Knowles, one of Dr. Thompson's former students at Bethany College in West Virginia. Knowles said she still remembers life lessons he taught her; she said she was still learning from him through his Facebook posts.

"Almost every day he would post something to think about," Knowles, of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, said.

Many Facebook friends also shared a "From Readers" story Dr. Thompson submitted to the Missourian in May 2012 — "Once a Missourian, Always a Missourian," in which he shared his life story.

Dr. Thompson was born on May 6, 1934, in Jonesburg, Missouri, where he lived for 12 years until moving to the Philippines to live with his aunt after his parents died.

After serving in the Army, Dr. Thompson returned to Missouri to attend MU with support from the GI Bill. Dr. Thompson earned two degrees: a bachelor's in psychology in 1961 and a doctorate in clinical psychology in 1974.

After earning his bachelor's degree, Dr. Thompson set out for a clinical internship in Palo Alto, California. He lived in San Francisco and witnessed the beginning of the hippie movement.

"I was one of the original hippies, except that I was different in that I actually had a regular job," Thompson wrote in his "From Readers" story. He said it helped him learn to take himself less seriously and have more fun.

In 1974, Dr. Thompson and his family settled into a farmhouse near Bethany, West Virginia, where he taught psychology at Bethany College, a liberal arts school, for 35 years. There, the rural Missouri native taught his family to appreciate nature. Younger son Jesse Thompson remembered hiking a nature trail with his father on the way to school.

Nancy Reed, a Bethany graduate living in St. Clairsville, Ohio, remembers Dr. Thompson talking about walking through the woods on his way to class. The psychology professor convinced Reed to change majors.

"He had a way of making everyone around him feel comfortable, special, like they were a good human being," Reed wrote in an email.

Dr. Thompson was well-known for teaching a freshman seminar course that welcomed students to the school. "Gale was a big part of the Bethany experience," said Hal Newman, a Bethany College graduate now in southern Quebec.

"Gale was the epitome of what it means to be a professor at a small liberal arts college like Bethany," said Gary Kappel, a history professor and interim dean of faculty at Bethany College. "He truly cared for his students and fellow professors."



T. Gale Thompson, center right, stands with his family.

Courtesy photo

In 1982, Dr. Thompson took a sabbatical and decided to take his family along for a semester at sea. Preteens at the time, Jesse and Micah Thompson recalled traveling the world with their parents, gaining knowledge and a new perspective along the way.

The Thompsons spent more than three months at sea, sailing around the world and visiting 13 countries as Dr. Thompson taught the students on board.

"He was a great father. He was very proactive with us," Jesse Thompson said. He said his father set aside time to coach Little League baseball games and do extracurricular activities.

Dr. Thompson also spent one day each week working as a clinical psychologist in a maximum security prison. In his "From Readers" story, he recalled sharing a book with a prisoner who eventually escaped — a motivational book titled "You Can Do It."

At age 75, Dr. Thompson retired and moved back to Columbia.

"I always loved Columbia," he wrote in his "From Readers" story. The MU graduate followed the school's football and basketball teams during his more than three decades in West Virginia.

"Dad was a wonderful father and mentor who lived a full life and always stayed active, playing noon hoops three to four days per week at Bethany until he retired," Micah Thompson said in an email. "He was also a huge Mizzou fan and rarely missed a basketball or football game when the Tigers were playing."

Along with the Facebook posts, one of Dr. Thompson's pastimes as a retiree was to put on a weekly drum circle with his friends, his sons said. Dr. Thompson had made his social circle into a literal circle of friends to share stories and laughs.

"Just about everything he did, he did well. That's a good life," Kim Thompson said of her husband. "Gale was kind-hearted and conscientious and lived his life to the fullest."



In his "From Readers," Dr. Thompson had a philosophy for living a good life: "Laugh a lot. Exercise a lot. Love a lot."

He is survived by his wife, Kim Thompson, two sons, Jesse Thompson of Aspen, Colorado, and Micah Thompson of Bend, Oregon; and two grandchildren, Koa and Maverick Thompson.

A remembrance and dedication will be held on Saturday, Oct. 8, at Bethany College in Bethany, West Virginia. The event will be part of the college's Homecoming celebration.

Locally, the family is inviting family and friends to stop by Dr. Thompson's home.

*Supervising editor is Elizabeth Brixey.*

#### MORE INFORMATION



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