



## Billy Lee Southwick

January 23, 1925 - December 29, 2024

Billy Lee Southwick, 99, of Muskogee, Oklahoma passed away Sunday, December 29, 2024. He was born January 23, 1925 to Darwin and Edna Southwick, in Cherokee, Oklahoma, a small town in rural northwest Oklahoma. He was known as Bill to nearly everybody except his mother and a few close business associates who preferred the more affectional "Billy". He and his parents lived in Wichita, Kansas during his childhood years and later the family moved to Tulsa, Oklahoma where he attended and graduated from Will Rogers High School. The class of '43 has remained a close-knit group through the years and to this date, some of them still meet monthly for lunch at the Celebrity Club.

Bill enlisted in the Army Corps of Engineers in August 1943 and his outfit was in New Guinea by December, staging equipment for the invasion of the Philippines. The 1874th Engineer Aviation Battalion built airfields on the islands of Noemfoor, Leyte, Mindoro, Mindanao, and maintained the airfield at Kure, Japan during occupation duty.

After his honorable discharge as Staff Sergeant, Bill attended the University of Tulsa graduating in 1950 with a BS degree in Business Management. He later credited the GI Bill and his education at the University of Tulsa for much of his success in the business world. During his 4 years at TU, he had a part time job at the old Domestic Laundry and Dry Cleaners at 11th & Lewis. Aside from

the free laundry and dry-cleaning perks, he was always appreciative that the owner, Mr. Paul Teel helped TU students with part time jobs by arranging their work schedules around their class schedules.

Bill's career in aviation spanned more than 35 years at American Airlines, Eastern Airlines, and in consulting. Bill was listed in Who's Who in aviation and was twice elected Chairman of the Air Transport Association of American Materials Management Committee. He retired from Eastern Airlines in 1988 as V. P. of Purchasing and spent the next 5 years consulting with airlines, suppliers, and PricewaterhouseCoopers. He often made contacts and recommendations for young men resulting in their promotion or helping them land a bigger job at another company. This was a source of great satisfaction and was often a subject at the dinner table.

After a two-year courtship, Bill married Sue Walton in 1948 while attending the University of Tulsa. It was a 68-year romance that was highlighted by additions of their son, William Clay and their daughter, Carolyn Sue. The family took many weekend camping trips to the Keys, Sanibel Island, and Colorado, plus vacations during the summer to historical and family destinations.

Bill's interests and hobbies changed over the years, from baseball and sports trivia to collecting US stamps to restoring '65 and '66 Mustangs to tracking his investments. Several of his restored cars won first place in car shows and later sold well at auctions in Florida. Bill's collection of recipes, cookbooks, and magazines was a family joke. He experimented with 55-gallon drums, cast iron kettles, charcoal and gas grills, rotisseries, and even a George Foreman grill—grilling and barbequing on weekends seemed to be a form of therapy and relaxation during his working years and continued on during retirement.

Bill was an active member of St. Paul United Methodist Church serving on the Finance and Missions Committees and the Board of Trustees. He was the treasurer of the Cornerstone Sunday School class for many years and a dedicated volunteer for the community food pantry. Several years ago, after reading the biography of William and Catherine Booth, founders of the Salvation Army, it became his favorite charity.

Mr. Southwick was preceded in death by his parents, Darwin and Edna Southwick; his wife, Sue Southwick; his daughter, Carolyn; and son, William Clay.

He is survived by his grandson, Joshua Southwick; sisters-in-law, Mardie Mose and Mary Day; along with several cousins, nieces, and nephews.

Bill's life will be remembered at 2:30PM, Monday, January 13, 2025 at Fort Gibson National Cemetery with military honors being presented.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests memorial be made to St. Paul United Methodist Church, 2130 W Okmulgee St, Muskogee, OK, 74401 or the Salvation Army, 700 Independence Ave, Muskogee, OK, 74403.

# Cemetery Details

## Fort Gibson National Cemetery

1423 Cemetery Rd  
Fort Gibson, OK 74434  
(918) 478-2334

# Previous Events

## Memorial Service

JAN 13. 2:30 PM (CT)

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