



## Dwight Grandia

July 4, 2021

Dwight E. Grandia (1942-2021)

After a two-year struggle with gall bladder cancer, Dwight Grandia passed away peacefully at home in Gulf Shores, Alabama, on July 4, 2021. He was the firstborn to Dutch-American parents, Anna Marie Cornelissen Grandia and Virgil L. Grandia, on May 22, 1942 in Oskaloosa, Iowa. Raised on a farm southeast of town, he was the only child in his class taught with eight other grades in a one-room schoolhouse. He graduated from Oskaloosa High in 1960.

Attending Iowa State University with a scholarship from Air Force ROTC, he received his BS degree in Aerospace Engineering. He earned money in the summers fighting forest fires in the west. He worked briefly for Boeing's missile and space division in Seattle.

He trained as an F-4 pilot in 1965 and joined a tactical fighter squadron on Bitburg Air Base in Germany in 1966. There he met his wife, Jacqueline S. Mixon, on a Christmas trip to Israel in 1967. They became engaged at "tulip

time” in Amsterdam in April 1969 and were married in her home community of Crossville, Alabama, on July 21, 1969.

Three months later, he was sent to Vietnam by way of Clark Air Force Base in the Philippines for jungle survival school. From Da Nang Air Base, he flew 150 combat missions. While in Vietnam, his son Timothy (Tim) Redden Grandia was born in spring 1970.

He was re-stationed to Hill Air Force Base in September 1970 as a test pilot on the F-4 and RF-4, with one dramatic emergency landing making the evening news. After he left the Air Force in January 1973, Delta Airlines hired him the next month and his daughter Elizabeth (Liza) Mara Grandia was born soon thereafter.

Over a 27-year career as Delta pilot, he flew the DC-8, B-727, 757, 767, and L-1011. Taking advantage of flight passes, the family shared many wonderful vacations. He and wife Jackie founded and led the Friends of the Library association in Stone Mountain, Georgia; served frequently as PTA officers; coordinated an election bond that built 17 new libraries in Dekalb County; and contributed to many other volunteer projects. He was deacon and elder for several Presbyterian Churches (Memorial Drive in Stone Mountain, Georgia; Decatur, GA; and Gulf Shores, AL), and attempted to found a new church affectionately known as the “Church of the Loons.”

After retirement in 2000, he preferred travel by land, touring all fifty states and Canadian provinces with his wife Jackie in their RV. For many years they tended a two-acre vegetable farm on Jackie's homeplace in northwest Alabama. They moved to Gulf Shores, Alabama, in 2004, where they volunteered for Habitat for Humanity. Together, they generously supported Democratic candidates, construction of wells in rural Africa, World Vision, Habitat for Humanity, and ProPetten in Guatemala, among other charities.

An avid gardener, scuppernong wine vintner, house builder, and beekeeper for four decades, he gave away buckets of produce and (literally) a ton of honey to friends and family. A skilled carpenter and handyman, he paid many favors to his neighbors, who admired his sunny spirit. In later years, he socialized with the Ancient Aviators and put in countless hours on seven new Habitat houses and many more renovations in southern Alabama.

The birth of his only grandchild, Adelaide Rose, to his daughter Liza in 2010 gave him a new identity, "Papa D." After his wife Jackie succumbed to cancer in 2013, he made many trips to see son Tim in Brooklyn, NY, and daughter Liza in Woodland, CA. He and granddaughter Adelaide became fast friends—biking, swimming, camping, reading, game playing, and even traveling to the Netherlands together in 2017. In later years and throughout the pandemic, Adelaide and her Papa D talked on the phone or FaceTime nearly every day.

Optimistic, generous, gregarious, patient, and always honest, Dwight could strike up a conversation with any stranger. From childhood farm antics, smoke jumping from helicopters into wildfires, winter survival training during a blizzard in Donner Pass, test pilot escapades, bee swarms, and worldwide travels, he had many adventures to tell.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Jacqueline Mixon Grandia on November 21, 2013. He is mourned by his son Tim Grandia [and husband Miguel Montelongo]; his beloved granddaughter Adelaide and daughter Liza Grandia; six younger brothers and sisters [listed with spouses]: Harold [and Eunice] Grandia, Marjorie [and Ron] VandeWall, Eileen [and Paul] O'Connor, Freda [and Tom] Perdue, Darlene Grandia, and Roger [and Jill] Grandia. With a photographic memory for dates, Dwight also kept up with the birthdays and life events of all his 14 nieces and nephews, as well their children, and onto great-great nieces and nephews.

A memorial service will be held at the First Presbyterian Church of Gulf Shores (309 East 21st Street, Gulf Shores, AL) on Saturday, July 24, 2021 at 2:00 pm. His ashes will lay next to his wife's in the Freewill Baptist cemetery of Crossville, Alabama. Reflecting his green thumb, his chosen epitaph was "Nearer to God in a garden." In line with Dwight's wishes, charitable contributions are preferred to flowers. A Go Fund Me memorial fund (<https://gofund.me/e95f7cfa>) has been established in his name to support agroecology education for Q'eqchi' Maya youth.

# Previous Events

## Memorial Service

JUL **24**. 2:00 PM (CT)

First Presbyterian Church of Foley  
195 East Berry Ave  
Foley, AL 36535