



William Thomas "Bill" Murdaugh

September 9, 1923 - January 16, 2015

William Thomas "Bill" Murdaugh, age 91, having traveled this world extensively in his career as a rocket scientist, relocated to the heavenly realm on January 16, 2015. He is no doubt busy looking around for a project and trying to locate anyone who speaks Spanish. To honor his wishes, a private family service was held Tuesday January 20, 2015.

Bill was born the youngest child of James Samuel Murdaugh and Mattie Jennings Murdaugh who predeceased him. He was also predeceased by his sister Louise Murdaugh Brown and his brother Raymond Murdaugh.

Bill enlisted in the Marine Corps in August of 1942. After basic training he returned briefly to Blytheville AK to marry his childhood sweetheart Kattie Mae Bingham before being sent overseas to war. The two of them shared 53 years of love, adventure, and service. Kattie predeceased Bill in 1997.

He was sent to the Admiralty Islands with the 6th US Marine Division where he was part of an 82 man communication platoon attached to an Army unit in the Philippines. Here he encountered the Spanish language and began a lifelong interest in that language. He seldom spoke of his service in the Pacific theater but his few comments made it clear that it was a brutal time.

At the end of WW II the couple moved to Columbus OH, starting their family as Bill worked construction by day and studied electronics by night. He remained in the Marine Corps Reserves and was called back to active duty for the Korean Conflict.

At the end of training in Cherry Point NC, Bill's commander recommend Bill for

advanced electronic school with the explanation that he was the only man in the unit with a child and theirs was a near certain death mission. That decision made Bill one of two men in his group to survive Korea and set him firmly on the path of a life spent working with weaponry missiles. He once remarked that “too many good men died fighting; it made better sense to fire missiles at the enemy than to meet them face to face in hand to hand combat.”

He worked for a number of companies in his specialty of missile electronics: designing and re-wiring missiles to hone their accuracy and performance. When a knotty problem arose, he was known to bring the schematics home, push the furniture against the walls in the living room, and crawl over them all night tracing wiring to locate problems. He took great pride in his small contribution to national security during the Cold War. At launch time, it was always “my missile” and it performed well; he received numerous citations for excellence.

Along the way, Bill continued his studies of Spanish and was an active father teaching his children many life skills and serving as a model for the values he wished them to learn. He and Kattie made certain their children absorbed the lessons of hard work, absolute belief that all people deserve respect, and the importance of service to an ideal greater than the individual. He was a model for living to the end, even choosing when to pass the reins to his children as he elected to move to Westminster Oaks and enjoy his last years surrounded by numerous friends.

Bill will be remembered as a modest man whose blue jeans and good ole’ boy Southern charm hid a fierce intellect and razor sharp wit. No one can recall him ever raising his voice but his will was that of a Marine at all times; he was seldom challenged and less frequently retreated. To the end he remained quietly stubborn, interested in politics, current on Florida State football, and fond of the many people with whom he readily connected. He was an easy man to respect, admire, and love. His family will continue to treasure and repeat many of Bill’s succinct observations on life and human nature assuring that he lives on in story and legend.

Bill is survived by his daughter Linda L. Ward of Greenville SC and Linda's children: Maj. Jason Ward, USAF, his wife April, and their children Christian Thomas, Brennan Marshal, Ryan Michael, and Isabelle Louise all of Lansing KS, and Jeremy Marshal Ward, his wife Carrie, and their sons Ian Marshal and Thomas Wayne, all of Wake Forest NC.

He is also survived by his son Dr. James Thomas "Jim" Murdaugh, Jim's wife Sara and their son Austin Thomas, all of Tallahassee FL.

A close and longtime family friend, Jan Rampey of Greenville SC also survives him.

The family has been uplifted by the many sincere expressions of support offered by friends and colleagues. Those wishing to make memorials may wish to consider Westminster Oaks Foundation, 4449 Meandering Way, Tallahassee, FL 32308; Big Bend Hospice, 1723 Mahan Center Blvd., Tallahassee, FL 32308; or Shriner's Hospital, 950 West Faris Road, Greenville SC, 29605.

Rocky Bevis of Bevis Funeral Home (www.bevisfh.com, 850-385-2193) is assisting the family with their arrangements.