
The Thrasher Newsletter

Volume 44. No.1

Spring 2025

TFA REUNION May 30-June 1

Be sure to scroll down for all the details.



Orange you glad...

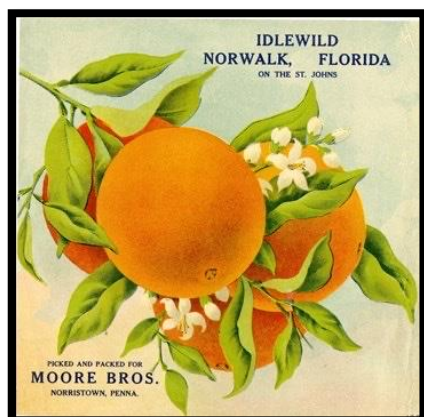
...to learn more about David Sumner's new book

A book review

By PAULA THRASHER

Dr. David E. Sumner's latest book is a really juicy read. But don't get the wrong idea. You could call it pulp fiction, but it's not that kind of pulp -- it's not even fiction. Think oranges, tangerines, limes, grapefruit. That kind of juicy. That kind of pulp. The native of Florida's Dade City and longtime TFA member writes with authority about the Sunshine State's beloved crop in "The Rise, Fall, and Rebirth of Florida's Citrus Industry," which will be released May 1. His keen grasp of the subject matter is not

surprising as Sumner grew up in a citrus farming family. His grandfather's groves were deemed "some of the finest in the county" in his 1937 obituary.



Growing up, he helped his father, Joseph D. Sumner, tend that same land, hoeing and fertilizing the trees, picking fruit, driving the tractor and irrigating the groves. He even worked at a large packing company where he recalls finding himself in comical Lucy-and-Ethel moments as he frantically placed lids on 50-gallon barrels of orange juice concentrate as they sped by on a conveyor belt.

You could say Sumner had orange juice in his veins, although he would ultimately opt for a transfusion of printer's ink, forging a career as a newspaper writer and editor, book author and journalism professor at Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana. Even so, nostalgia for those boyhood days growing up among the groves is clear as he writes of his memories in the preface to his book: "I could see blossoming orange trees from my bedroom window. The sweet aroma of orange blossoms in the spring air still lingers in my memory."



Thus his affection for – and his emotional investment in -- the citrus industry clearly informs his writing as he delves deeply into many far-ranging topics related to its past, present and future. As he researched this "labor of love" he spent countless hours interviewing what seems like every human with any connection to the industry, growers past and present, state agriculture officials and others who could provide insight. One such person is fellow TFA member Joe Stine who weighs in how his Orlando industrial supply company served his customers with citrus processing companies. Stine recalls how he, in his

teenage years during the 1950s, helped his father plant a 20-acre orange grove in

Seminole County only to see it wiped out in the freeze of 1962. They never replanted or started a larger grove because, he says, “The citrus industry was exploding at that time, and it was the beginning of a golden era. But the little guy did not have access to the trees needed to start a grove. The big guys were buying thousands of trees, and the nurseries were not big enough to meet the demand.”

The result of this exhaustive research is a thorough and quite detailed book peppered with historic maps and photographs and a series of tables in which we learn such things as the farmers’ use of tractors rose from 7.4% in 1925 to 72.3% in 1959 while use of horses/mules dropped from 84.2% in 1925 to 30.6% in 1959.

But just when the book starts to feel a bit academic, and the casual reader begins to feel bogged down by facts and figures, Sumner shifts the tone. He brings us around with



citrus’ role in popular culture: lyrics of the bluegrass standard “Orange Blossom Special,” the best known version of which is Johnny Cash’s; the skinny on how WW, the Beverly Hills Diet and other weight loss programs became a blessing and a curse as they encouraged consumption of fresh oranges and grapefruit for their nutritional value but discouraged drinking fruit juices because of their high-calorie content; singer-entertainer Anita Bryant’s tenure as “the Sunshine-Tree Girl,”

the face and voice of the Florida Citrus Commission from 1968-1980. And don’t forget the heady fragrance of orange blossom cologne. The colorful postcards and citrus crate labels that are now collectors’ items. The Orange Bowl in Miami. The scourge of that ubiquitous powdered “orange juice” Tang, which famously traveled into space with astronauts.

Bits of trivia sprinkled in are fun, too. Did you know there was something akin to California’s 1848 Gold Rush that happened in Florida? Call it the Orange Crush. Sumner writes that “orange fever” was sometimes used to describe the large influx of northerners to Florida, setting into motion what would be the first Florida citrus boom by 1886.

It’s been a long row to hoe for King Orange. Killing freezes, devastating hurricanes, and pestilence and diseases have proved to be formidable foes through the years, turning fortunes overnight. Only the resilience of Florida citrus growers kept the industry alive.

So raise a glass of OJ to the monarch of the groves. And to David Sumner, whose tireless work resulted in this insightful book.

The following is David's March 28 press release he prepared about the book

David E. Sumner

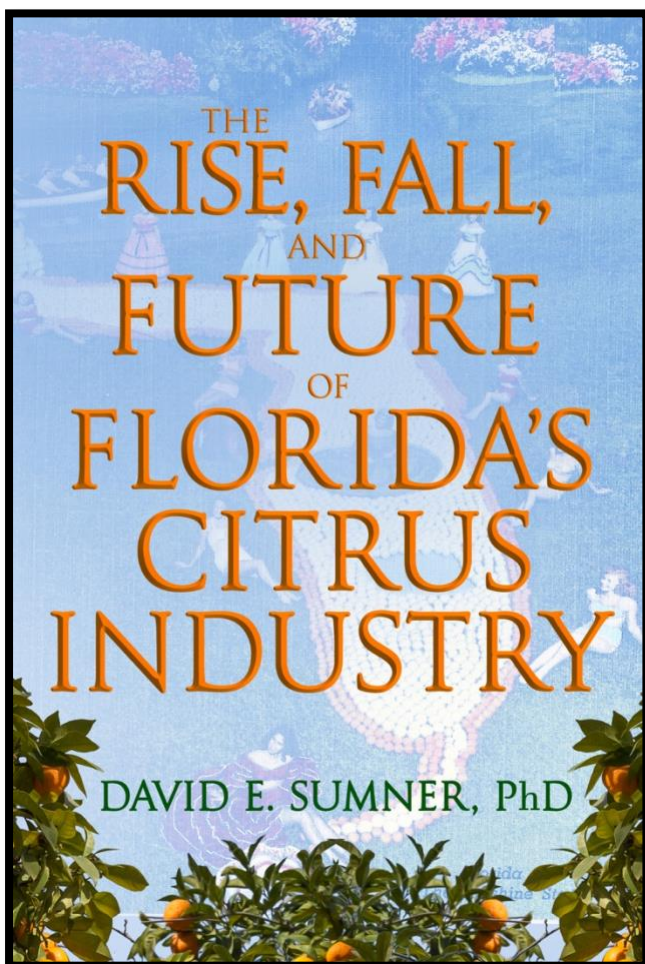
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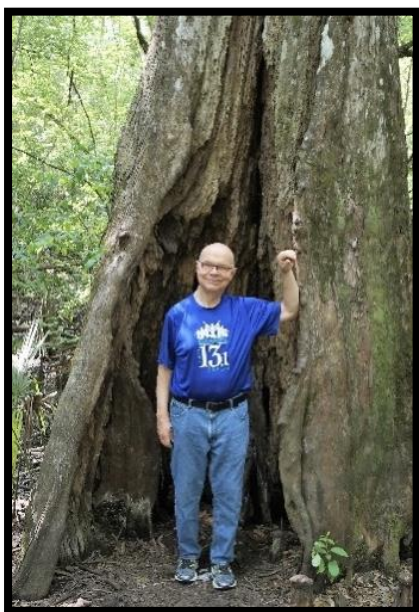
PRESS RELEASE

March 28, 2025

The story of Florida's citrus industry has followed an up-and-down path of battling freezes, diseases, and hurricanes for 150 years. After an 1895 freeze almost destroyed the industry, Florida growers fought back and replanted. After surviving the Great Depression and World War II, Florida growers experienced their "Golden Era" from 1950-1980. Seven freezes in the 1980s again devastated the industry, but growers fought back and replanted. Since then, the citrus canker and citrus greening diseases have destroyed thousands of



acres, and growers are still recovering.



David tells the story of Florida citrus from the end of the Civil War to the present after visiting Florida archives and conducting 53 interviews with growers and industry leaders. Not since John McPhee's 1967 best-seller, *Oranges*, has any book told the story of Florida citrus in a lively, popular style that will appeal to readers inside and outside the industry. New scientific breakthroughs for a disease-resistant tree are explained in chapter 14 and offer signs of hope for the future of the industry.

On sale May 1 exclusively at BarnesandNoble.com (bn.com) for \$14.95 (paper) or \$24.95 (hardback). The 330-page book includes 35 historic photos dating back to the late 1800.

David will be a keynote speaker at the Florida Citrus Annual Conference in Bonita Springs, Fla. on June 12. He is a 5th-generation Floridian who grew up in a citrus family that dates back to the 1880s. He recently discovered in his research that Cousin John Thrasher bought an orange grove near Dade City after he moved there in the 1880s. Cousin John's brother, David Hughey Thrasher, was also an orange grower in Dade City.

Matt Joyner, Executive Vice President at Florida Citrus Mutual, says, "The story of the people and events that shaped the Florida citrus industry is in many ways the story of Florida itself. In *The Rise, Fall, and Future of Florida's Citrus Industry*, David E. Sumner has captured the essence of an iconic industry that has been part of the fabric of Florida since statehood and will continue to define the Sunshine State for decades to come. It is a must read for anyone interested in understanding the real Florida."



"*The Rise, Fall, and Future of Florida's Citrus Industry* is a testament to the industry's ability to survive challenges that at the time seemed insurmountable. This book gives us hope."

*J. Scott Angle, Senior
Vice President
for Agriculture and
Natural Resources,
University of Florida*





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Down by the riverside

By PAULA THRASHER

All roads lead to Chattanooga May 30-June 1, as Thrasher Family Association members travel from near and far for the annual Reunion in this vibrant and picturesque city on the Tennessee River, in the shadow of Lookout Mountain. A highlight of the gathering will be touring the Tennessee Aquarium, which is perched on the riverside downtown. The city of nearly 190,000 that lies in the Appalachian foothills was named one of the “Top 45 places to go” in the world by the New York Times.

So, lace up your walking shoes! With our reunion hotel – the Courtyard by Marriott – conveniently located just steps from the Aquarium as well as the IMAX 3D Theater,

navigating on foot will be the way to go. The Riverport Grille, Saturday night's dinner destination, is across Broad Street from the back of our hotel. Also nearby are more than 20 restaurants, shops galore and major attractions such as the Southern Belle Riverboat at Ross's Landing and the Medal of Honor Heritage Center on the Aquarium Plaza, also the site of the Chattanooga Visitor Center.

For the adventurous among us, there's the nearby Escape Experience, where you can challenge your "cousins" to find out who's the Houdini among us, and for the kid in all of us, there's the Pinball Museum, where you can play the exhibits just for fun. If you want to visit the Chattanooga Choo Choo, the popular attraction is a free trolley ride away. Luckily, the trolley leaves regularly from an alley around the corner from our hotel. In fact, there's so much to see and do, you should consider coming to town early or staying later.

But back to the hotel. The property has just undergone a top-to-bottom renovation of its 128 rooms, the restaurant, lobby, and meeting room, where we'll have our annual meeting and Saturday boxed lunch. So, it promises to look like a brand-new hotel for our reunion.

The Courtyard's nightly group rate is \$149 plus state and local taxes. Breakfast is not included in the rate but is available in the hotel's full-service restaurant. Parking at the adjacent covered deck is \$18 a night with unlimited in and out.

We have a block of 10 rooms for Friday and Saturday at a discounted rate. The special rate also includes five rooms for both Thursday and Sunday nights for those of you who may want to add additional nights to your stay. The last day to book to get the group rate is April 29. You may make reservations in the TFA Reunion block by calling the hotel directly at 423-755-0871. However, the preferred booking method is through the reservation link below.

<https://www.marriott.com/event-reservations/reservation-link.mi?id=1732552474192&key=GRP&guestreslink2=true&app=resvlink>

The registration fee of \$125 per person covers Saturday's box lunch, Aquarium visit, Saturday night dinner, meeting room expense and door prizes from local businesses.



Those arriving early on Friday have the option to catch the 3 p.m. Southern Belle Riverboat Sights Cruise, an hour and a half cruise on the Tennessee with live narration. The same cruise is offered Saturdays and Sundays. Adult tickets are \$34.99, which includes that local delicacy – the original Lookout Mountain Moon Pie! Or here's another adventure: the Chattanooga

Ducks will be rolling on the river – and on dry land around town – in WWII Duck Boats. Times are noon, 2, 4, 6 and 7:15 p.m. Friday, Saturday and Sunday, so you could work in that optional activity. Adult tickets are \$34.99 for a two-hour sightseeing tour and splash down in the river.

On Friday night, it's dinner on your own, and you may want to join some of your "cousins" at one of many fun dining destinations. Options within walking distance include the artsy, funky Agave & Rye, which faces the river and has an outdoor patio; Puckett's, known for slow-smoked barbecue and Southern comfort food; Wooden City for wood-fired pizza and Lupi's ("selling pizza by the slice since 1996!"); and Burger Republic for creative burgers like the Jack Daniel's honey-glazed Tennessee 'burg and handspun milkshakes (adults can get a little something-something in theirs).

Then there's City Café, an old-school diner boasting "hearty portions of American fare, all-day breakfast" and "huge" desserts and 24-hour service; and by contrast, the upscale Old Gilman's Grill, a bistro and wine shop serving French and American cuisine; and Hennen's, a "sleek, quiet" dining room catty-corner from the hotel, specializing in "quality-cut steaks" and seafood. Ethnic eateries nearby are Thai Smile, Mayan Kitchen (Latin American), Sitar Indian Cuisine, Tony's (traditional Italian and Sicilian cuisine), and Rodizio Grill (Brazilian steakhouse) and Fonda San Jose (authentic Mexican).

Most of the restaurants mentioned here are locally owned. If you prefer the familiar, go for Sticky Fingers, Mellow Mushroom or Buffalo Wild Wings (open until midnight). At any rate, we may want to split up according to what we're in the mood for as most of the places may not be able to accommodate a large group on a Friday night.

Saturday morning, we will have our annual meeting followed by box lunches catered by the Courtyard. Saturday afternoon, we will visit the amazing Tennessee Aquarium. After touring the Aquarium, you may want to catch a film at the IMAX Theatre; this is an optional activity on your own but admission is included with the Aquarium ticket. There's a 5 p.m. showing of "Call of the Dolphins 3D" with a running time of 40 minutes.

Saturday night's dinner will be at 7 p.m. at the Riverport Grille, a mere 495 feet from the Courtyard, where we'll have the River Room to ourselves. Entrée choices, presented buffet-style, include Chicken Bruschetta (grilled chicken breasts topped with fresh mozzarella, spinach and balsamic-basil tomatoes), Seared Lemon Pepper Crusted Salmon Fillets, or Grilled Pork Chops with Herb Gravy. Dessert will be petite brownies squares and petite bread pudding squares. Non-alcoholic beverages are complimentary; you may purchase your favorite "potent potable" (catch the "Jeopardy" category reference?). Servers will be on hand to take bar orders.

Come join your "cousins" in Chattanooga for lots of fun and fellowship!

Some useful websites as you plan your visit:

Tennessee Aquarium and IMAX 3D Theater, www.tnaqua.org

Southern Belle Riverboat, www.chattanoogaariverboat.com

Chattanooga Duck Tours, www.chattanoogaducks.com

Visitor guides: www.visitchattanooga.com, www.explorechatt.com



Making the Thrasher Connection to Chattanooga

By JOHN PAUL THRASHER

If you are out and about driving in Chattanooga at the time of the TFA Reunion, you might just find yourself crossing the Wilkes T. Thrasher Bridge over the Chickamauga Dam on the Tennessee River. Wilkes' grandfather just happens to be "Cousin John" Thrasher.

As we were planning the 2025 Chattanooga Reunion, we were unaware of this important Thrasher connection to the "Scenic City." But here's how it goes.

John James "Cousin John" Thrasher's oldest son, Jesse Scaife Thrasher, was born near Marthasville, Ga., in 1845. (In December of the same year the name of the town was changed to Atlanta.) At the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861, Jesse enlisted in Company K, "Davis Infantry" of the 7th Georgia Regiment, which was attached to the Army of Northern Virginia, C.S.A. He fought in the Battle of First Manassas on July 21, 1861, and continued active service with his regiment until being stricken with pneumonia in late 1861. He was in a Confederate hospital in Charlottesville, Va., and was not expected to live when his father received a telegram about his condition. "Cousin John" traveled from Atlanta to Charlottesville and brought Jesse back to Atlanta where he was nursed back to health.



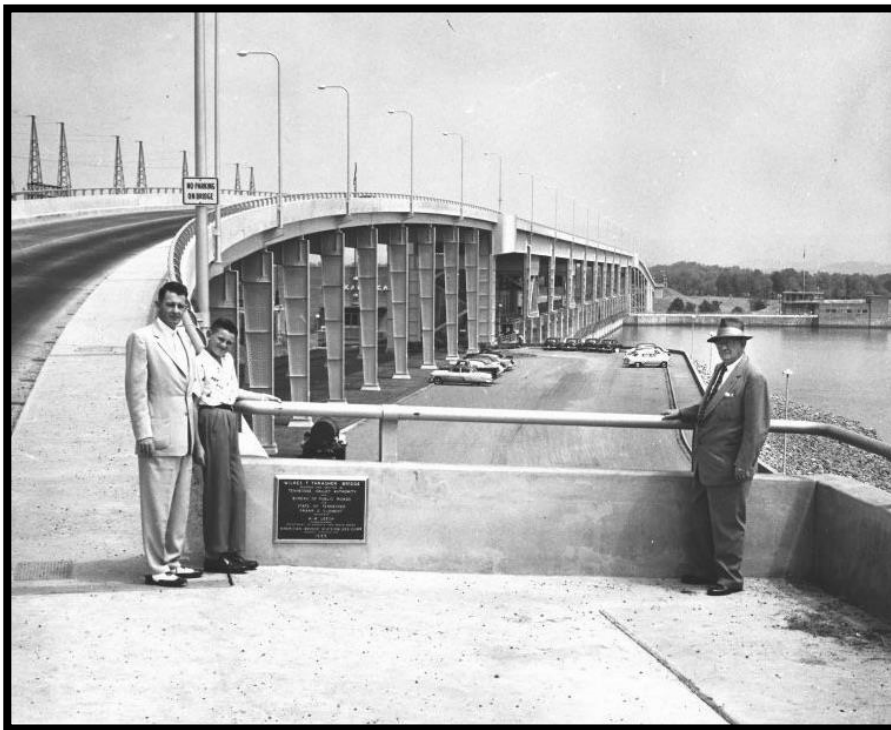
*This is Jesse Scaife Thrasher in
1924 Atlanta newspaper*

While back in Atlanta, Jesse helped organize Company A of the 64th Georgia Regiment. In the spring of 1863, the regiment was transferred to Florida. He served as a 2nd Lt., then 1st Lt. and then Capt. in the regiment. On Feb. 20, 1864, the 64th Georgia fought in the Battle of Olustee (Ocean Pond), where Jesse was wounded in the leg. In May 1864, the 64th was ordered to Virginia and proceeded to Petersburg and shared in the battles, skirmishes and hardships of the Petersburg siege and the Appomattox operations.

After the war, Jesse returned to Atlanta and on March 20, 1866, married Mary McCamey, the daughter of Col. Samuel R. McCamey and Elizabeth Bishop. They had two children together Samuel (born 1867) and Frank (born 1868). According to a family

genealogy written by founding TFA member Vessie Thrasher Ranier, both boys died young. Their mother predeceased her sons, dying on Sept. 21, 1872, at age 27 years. She is buried in Gainesville, Ga.

On Oct. 2, 1876, in Gainesville, Jesse married Lillie James Wilkes, the daughter of Rev. William Clay Wilkes, a renowned religious leader and educator. Rev. Wilkes founded the Monroe Female College, Spalding Seminary and in 1876 he founded Brenau College in Gainesville, serving as the first president. After getting married, the young family lived in south Georgia (Quitman) and Florida (Madison, Sumterville, and Dade City), adding four children to their household – Mary Bethuel (March 29, 1878) and Paul (Dec. 14, 1878), both born in Quitman, and Irma Lillian (June 25, 1882) and Maggie D. (birthdate unknown) born in Dade City and Sumterville, respectively.



Later the family moved to Chattanooga where three of their eight children were born -- Ruth (Oct. 8, 1890), Wilkes T. (June 14, 1893), Elizabeth R. (March 10, 1898) and one, Eugene A. (Feb. 23, 1902), was born in Edwardsville, Ala., but lived most of life in Chattanooga.

Historical photo circa 1955 of the Wilkes T. Thrasher Bridge in Chattanooga. L-R Wilkes T. Thrasher Jr., Wilkes T. Thrasher III and the namesake, Wilkes T. Thrasher.

Wilkes T. Thrasher was a lawyer, judge and Democratic Party leader in Chattanooga. He earned his law degree from the Knoxville College of Law before returning to Chattanooga to begin his legal career. But before that career could become established, Wilkes was sent to Europe to fight in WWI. After the war, he returned to Chattanooga where he was elected to the Hamilton County Court in 1924 and served for 17 years. He was elected a Hamilton County Judge in 1948.

As a dedicated proponent for education and mental health, he was responsible for the construction of 13 new school buildings and 54 school additions while increasing the school budget by 170 percent. Wilkes T. Thrasher Elementary School in Signal Mountain was named in his memory.

He was instrumental in getting a bridge built across the Tennessee River over TVA's Chickamauga Dam. Although convincing Washington to agree to fund the bridge was an uphill battle, he finally succeeded in 1950. Construction of the \$2.4 million dollar bridge began despite steel and labor shortages.

When it finally opened in 1955, TVA estimated that 25,000 people crossed it in a single day. Spanning 3,700 feet, it was the second largest bridge over a TVA dam. The year it opened the Tennessee state legislature named the span the Wilkes T. Thrasher Bridge in his honor.



Wilkes T. Thrasher Bridge on the Tennessee River in Chattanooga

He died tragically in 1960 at age 66, when he attempted to cross a four-lane highway with his 15-year-old grandson and was struck and killed by a motorist. He was on his way to the VFW clubhouse to attend a meeting.

Wilkes T. Thrasher Jr. followed in his father's footsteps, serving as a lawyer and judge in Hamilton County. His son, Wilkes T. Thrasher III, was killed in an accident with a handgun in 1965 while attending the University of Mississippi. He was studying pre-law and had planned to attend law school to become a lawyer like his father and grandfather.

The last time the Thrasher Family Association held its reunion in Chattanooga was 2012. We hope to contact some of our Chattanooga "cousins" to invite them to attend the 2025 reunion.

Joan Stine obituary



Joan Lemke Stine, 89, Orlando, Fla., passed away on Jan. 21, 2025. She was born in Jacksonville, Fla., on July 15, 1935, to Frederick W. Lemke and Isobel Reddick Lemke. In freshmen English class at the University of Florida, she met Joseph P. Stine. On June 4, 1956, they were married and have since celebrated 68 "happy" years of marriage.

She is survived by her husband, Joseph, son Jeffrey (Nancy) Stine, and daughters, Darby Stine, Katie Blythe (Michael Moryc) Stine, Megan (Raymond) Harrison, and Jennifer (Jeffrey) Smith. She was preceded in death by daughter, Allison (Richard) Chatham. She was a grandmother to 10

grandchildren and to two great granddaughters.

Joan was a devoted homemaker until all six children left home. Then she helped a friend for six years in an antique shop in College Park followed by several years working in a quilt shop. She was a natural artist: shell mirrors, tole painting, stained glass, and finally quilting. Her quilts and other fabric arts are treasured by her family and friends. She fostered and celebrated beauty and friendship and was a dedicated member of Alpha Chi Omega Sorority, the Pine Castle Garden Club, Rosalind Club, and First Presbyterian Church of Orlando. At First Presbyterian Church she was a Sunday School teacher for children, women's circle member, Joy Gift chairman, directed several Christmas pageants and a longtime member of the Questerian Bible Class.

Some of her favorite trips were to England to explore historical places and sip tea, as well as staying year after year at favorite inns in the Southeast in between family visits and genealogy adventures. Her family remembers her support and enthusiasm for whatever their passions happened to be -- traveling, writing, language, art, dance, and even engineering (although she saved the technical conversations for Joseph). Joan was never short on a kind smile, an extra plate for dinner, or a generous word of encouragement.

A celebration of life was held Feb. 21 in the chapel of the First Presbyterian Church of Orlando.

Miki Thrasher McFatter obituary



Mildred Louise Thrasher McFatter, affectionately known to all as Miki or “Mikimac”, died on March 5, 2025, in Athens, Georgia. She was born in Athens in 1946, daughter of the late Henry Grady Thrasher II and Mildred G. Thrasher. April 16 would have been her 78th birthday.

She is survived by her husband, William D. (Bill) McFatter. Other survivors include brother Henry Grady Thrasher III, sister-in-law, Kathy Prescott, nephews Henry Grady Thrasher IV and Kelly B. Thrasher, grand-nephews Brock Thrasher, Mac Thrasher and Jack Thrasher, and grand-niece Daphne Thrasher, as well as close relatives Deborah Carsch and her daughter Emily.

Miki graduated from Dothan High School in 1964 and from the University of Alabama in 1968. She later obtained a Masters in Education from Troy State University. She and husband Bill lived in Dothan, Alabama for more than 40 years. Miki taught school and managed Bill's campaigns, who three times won elections for Houston County Judge. She was loved in the Dothan community for her bright personality, unique sense of humor and energetic approach to everything she undertook.



After retirement, Miki and Bill moved to Panama City Beach, Florida, where for decades they hosted vacations for family and friends at their home known as “McBeach”. Their annual Fourth of July celebrations will be long remembered as the highlight of the summers.

Those who wish may make a memorial gift to support Landmark Park in Dothan: Dothan Landmarks Foundation Tribute Fund, PO Box 6362, Dothan, AL 36302. PHONE: 334-794-3452

TFA is self-supporting. To pay your \$20 dues for 2025 or to make a contribution, make your check to:



The Thrasher Family Association

Mail it to:

Warren Thrasher, Jr.

Thrasher Family Association Treasurer

50 Sassafras Trail

Savannah, Georgia 31404

Editor's Note

The Thrasher Family Association newsletter needs your input. Share ideas for stories – or better yet, suggest an article you'd like to submit. We're looking for profiles of TFA members, articles focused on family history and heritage, genealogy, photographs, reviews of books on topics related to the family, features on books written by members, and news about people and places. Get in touch with newsletter editor Paula Thrasher by calling or texting [770-328-7716](tel:770-328-7716) or email to pthrasher@numail.org. The newsletter is published four times a year on a seasonal basis and is published via email.

Staff members include:

Paula Thrasher, newsletter editor

David E. Sumner, chief contributing writer

Sue Q. Thrasher, layout and design

John Paul Thrasher, production director

Registration Form for 2025 TFA Reunion



The registration fee is \$125/person. This covers Saturday's box lunch, Aquarium visit, Saturday night dinner, meeting room expense and door prizes from local businesses.

Please mail registration checks (\$125/person) to:

**Paula & John Thrasher
5 Woodridge Place
Newnan, GA 30265**

NOTE: Registration Deadline is April 30, 2025

Number attending: _____ **Amount enclosed:** _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City and zip: _____

We hope you will be able to join your "cousins" in Chattanooga

