



## Dr. William "Bill" Allen Speck

April 8, 1938 - April 15, 2025

Retired history professor Dr. William "Bill" Allen Speck, age 87, of Fairhope, Alabama, died on April 15, 2025.

Bill was born in Toledo, Ohio in 1938 to Claire and Lucille Speck. His paternal grandfather George Speck was the publisher and editor of the newspaper Pemberville Leader in Pemberville, Ohio. Bill was named after William Allen White, the well-known journalist, who was friends with his grandfather. His father Claire Speck served in World War I and went on to organize the State Bank of Toledo, where he served as president. His mother Lucille Speck was a registered nurse. Bill had three siblings—Don Speck, John Speck, and Tom Speck.

When Bill was in the eighth grade, his family moved to Ft. Lauderdale, Florida because of his asthma. Bill graduated from Ft. Lauderdale High School in 1956 and then went to Stetson University, where he graduated with a BA in History in 1960. Bill received his PhD in history from Florida State University in 1965 and was offered a job teaching history at the new University of South Alabama in Mobile. He taught the history of civilization and 19th- and 20th-century European history until he retired in 1990.

Bill published scholarly articles and co-authored books in his professional research on historical topics. He was passionately interested in ideas—in

history, philosophy, religion, literature, and politics—and everything he taught and wrote about reflected that interest. As a professor in the Deep South in the 1960s, he also advocated for civil rights and spoke out against the Vietnam War.

In 1960, Bill married Christina Caprez, who had come to Florida from Switzerland, and they had two children, Margaret “Margie” Christina Speck and Donald “Don” Conrad Speck.

In 2002, Bill married Bettie Pennell, a retired office manager and an organist and choir member at St. James Episcopal Church. Bill and Bettie were active members at St. James for many years. Bettie preceded Bill in death in April 2024.

Bill started jogging in the early 1970s before it was popular, starting on the Royal Canadian Air Force regimen. He progressed to running four to five miles a day, which he continued for over forty years.

He also loved classical music, especially Mozart, and would play classical records throughout the day. He helped to found WHIL, the classical music radio station in Mobile.

Another interest was foreign films, and Bill led the Foreign Film Club at the University of South Alabama.

Bill was also a lifelong learner and especially enjoyed reading and studying literature. He had a large personal library and attended a continuing education literature class at Faulkner Community College in Fairhope for several years. He always enjoyed discussing the books he was reading with his daughter Margie, who went on to become an English professor.

He also enjoyed traveling and hiking, especially in the Swiss Alps and the Olympic Mountains near Seattle, Washington.

Bill was gifted at all types of writing, from academic writing to informal articles to letters. Bill wrote long, thoughtful letters to family members, commenting on current events and the books he was reading and encouraging his children and grandchildren in their educational and career endeavors. He was also financially generous and helped his family members at important points in their lives.

Bill also enjoyed keeping up with the stock market. He and his son Don, a software engineer, shared an interest in the stock market and would often discuss and debate it.

Bill was fond of cats and had several cats as pets. He could often be found stretched out on a couch, listening to classical music, with a cat on his lap.

He inspired and influenced his children by his love of learning, his interest in civil rights, and his generosity.

Bill is survived by his two children, Margie Netherton and Don Speck; son-in-law Bill Netherton and daughter-in-law Andrea Normand; and three grandchildren, Stephen, Mary, and Matt.

A graveside service for Bill will be held on Tuesday, April 22, at 11:30 a.m. at Pine Rest Funeral Home, Foley, Alabama.

# Cemetery Details

## Pine Rest Memorial Park

16541 US Hwy 98  
Foley, AL 36535  
(251) 943-5667  
info@pinerestfuneralhome.com

# Previous Events

## Graveside Service

APR **22**. 11:30 AM - 12:30 PM (CT)

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