



# William Carlisle Thacker

May 11, 1944 - August 3, 2025

William Carlisle Thacker, age 81, passed away in Cary, NC on Sunday, August 3, 2025. Carlisle was born on May 11, 1944, in Albany, GA to parents Guthrie Carlisle Thacker (1904-1985) and Rosa Thacker (1913-1999). He is predeceased by his sister Doris Cassius (2024).

Carlisle is survived by his wife of 46 years, Micaela Huber-Thacker, his children, Benjamin Thacker (Mandy), Emily Abrams (Alexander), and Alexander Thacker (Brittany), and his grandchildren, Julian, Zuri, Jacob, and Ethan.

Carlisle's formative years were shaped by a need to develop an early independence while his parents faced health concerns. This led him to become self-reliant, responsible, pragmatic, and forever financially frugal. In spite of the family's hardships, Carlisle was successful socially and academically. He graduated high school in Savannah, GA as valedictorian and prom king.

Carlisle attended Armstrong Junior College in Savannah, followed by a mathematics degree at Georgia Tech and a doctorate in high energy physics from University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. While completing his postdoctoral work at the University of Chicago, he met his future wife, Micaela, who was attending the same university for a semester abroad from her native Germany.

For over three decades, Carlisle worked as a research scientist at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) on Virginia Key, Florida. He also served as an adjunct professor at the University of Miami's Rosenstiel School of Marine, Atmospheric, and Earth Science. He published extensively in peer reviewed scientific journals and traveled worldwide for conferences, forming close life-long friendships with many of his colleagues.

Carlisle was brilliant and accomplished and had the privilege of meeting some of the world's political and spiritual leaders. In 1982, Carlisle was awarded the German Humboldt

Prize for his scientific achievements and international collaboration, which allowed him and his young family to spend a year living in Geesthacht, near Hamburg, while he worked at a research facility. He also met the President of Germany at a special reception. In 1985, Carlisle was invited to the 10th International Nathiagali Summer College on Physics & Contemporary Needs in Pakistan, where he met President General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq. In 2004, Carlisle met the Dalai Lama at the University of Miami.

Carlisle was strong-willed and could be headstrong, but he also had a sense of humor and enjoyed making a pun or singing a silly song from his childhood. He had a lot of self-discipline, thrived on routine, and kept a lot of his agency and desire to be in charge until the end. He understood the value of earning and saving money, having started as a child with a paper route, followed by library jobs, and working as a graduate teaching assistant while completing his degrees.

Following a cardiac health scare, Carlisle became a strict vegan and proponent of healthy eating. He became adept at preparing meals for himself and was often in the kitchen cooking large pots of vegetarian Indian meals. He also embraced tai chi, yoga, and Zen meditation as additional means to deal with stress and broaden his mind. He practiced them diligently for a number of years, while at the same time studying their history and foundations.

Carlisle had a special fondness for dogs and adopted four Dalmatians over the years. He enjoyed long dog walks in Pinecrest, where he met many neighbors and befriended many dogs. A neighborhood walk with Carlisle would often include a lecture on an obscure topic he was interested in or on a book he was reading. In the summer, he would often return from his walks with a bag full of fresh mangoes, fallen from neighborhood trees, which he would meticulously cut up and freeze for future smoothies.

Carlisle was diagnosed with ALS in October of 2023. This provided the motivation to complete an intended relocation to North Carolina. He and Micaela found a home in Cary in February of 2024, only two blocks away from Alex and Brittany, who were able to provide support to them.

Carlisle's greatest pleasures were continuous learning and engaging in conversations about science, politics, and philosophy. He enjoyed listening to jazz music, playing billiards, watching mysteries and British television, and playing daily word games and puzzles. He always kept up with news and commentary and was very aware of injustices and passionate about ways the world could be better.

Throughout his lifetime Carlisle never lost his love of reading and learning. He must have read hundreds, if not thousands of books - and he remembered most of them in astonishing detail. His close friend Bill, who spoke with him weekly in his final months, quotes him as saying, "With my death, a whole library will be lost."

Carlisle contributed to scientific research even in his death. He chose to have his body donated to science. His brain was donated to the University of Miami for neuroscience research into Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), the disease that led to his death. They may not be able to unlock the library that resided in his mind but hopefully they will unlock some of the mysteries surrounding this terrible disease.

There will be no public funeral or memorial service, however the family welcomes messages, memories, and tributes through the virtual memory book at this site.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to the ALS Association at [www.als.org](http://www.als.org).

# Tribute Wall

ES

“ I am Edward Simmons, a high school classmate of Carlisle and his sister Doris who enjoyed friendship with both Carlisle and Doris. I deeply regret the parting of our life paths after high school because our intellectual interests and professional and academic careers would have led to frequent and deeply stimulating conversations. I am also impressed that the obituary shows how deeply those who remain behind appreciated Carlisle's rich life and accomplishments. As a father and grandfather in my 80s I know how rare it is for younger generations to reach such deep levels of appreciation. He was blessed and he was an even greater blessing to his family.

Edward Simmons - August 15, 2025 at 04:38 PM

EG

So sad that his brain was so brilliant. And then it defeated him knew him from Sunday school and high school. His father was my Latin teacher.

Ellen Schneider Goodrich - November 20, 2025 at 08:57 PM

KK

“ Kineret Ben Knaan lit a candle in memory of William Carlisle Thacker



Kineret Ben Knaan - August 15, 2025 at 09:26 AM

KK

Dear Micaela and the family,  
I'm deeply sorry for your loss!  
May Carlisle's memory be a blessing.

Kineret Ben Knaan - August 15, 2025 at 09:33 AM

BM

“ Dear Micaela and family, please accept my heartfelt sympathy towards the recent passing of Carlisle, your beloved husband and father. Keeping you in my thoughts and prayers. May the Lord comfort you in this unexpected loss. May the lessons you learned from him and the love you shared with him remain in your hearts and lives forever.  
Most sincerely,  
Beth (Dunbar) Murphy

Beth Murphy - August 14, 2025 at 10:45 PM

EE

“ I did not meet William but he sounds like an amazing man. I hope it's some comfort that his values continue through his children. May he rest in peace after a life well lived.

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**Emily E** - August 13, 2025 at 06:07 PM