



Joseph Eldon Thurstenson

September 15, 1938 - May 4, 2026

Joseph Eldon Thurstenson, born September 15, 1938 in Spencer, Nebraska, went home to be with his Lord and Savior on May 4, 2026, surrounded by his loving family.

Joe was the beloved husband of Edith Awynne Thurstenson for 60 beautiful years. Together they built a life rooted in faith, love, and service. He was the devoted father of Ricky Joe Thurstenson and wife Melissa, Christopher David Thurstenson and wife Sarah, Jeffrey Marc Thurstenson and wife Judie, John Josef Thurstenson and wife Deliverance, and Benjamin Lee Thurstenson and wife Billye. He was a proud grandfather to many grandchildren and great-grandchildren, and he cherished every moment spent with his growing family. Joe was preceded in death by his parents, John Josef Thurstenson and Elsie Lilian Gall Thurstenson, and his brother, David LeRoy Thurstenson. He is survived by his siblings: Twylla Helmkamp, Denise Crane-Scott, Linda Miller, and Dawn Brittain-Haskins, along with many dear nieces and nephews.

A man whose life was centered on Christ, Joe graduated with a degree in ministry from Lincoln Christian College. He served as a youth minister and Christian camp counselor, touching countless young lives with the Gospel. For many years, he and Awynne served faithfully as house-parents at Cookson Hills Christian Ministries, where they raised and loved numerous foster children as their own.

Later in his career, Joe worked as Personnel Director at La-Z-Boy until his retirement. In his retirement years, he found joy in serving as a bus driver for

Siloam Springs Public Schools, earning a second retirement while continuing to invest in the lives of children and families.

Joe had a deep love for music and worship. He played the organ beautifully, sang with a joyful heart, and directed many youth and adult choirs. He served as an elder at Community Christian Fellowship and opened his home generously, where Awynne's hearty meals and warm hospitality created a place of fellowship and belonging for so many.

Joe and Awynne spent several summers serving on mission teams and with choirs in Northern Ireland through John Brown University. He also found simple joys on their 5-acre family farm in the Illinois River Valley south of Siloam Springs, which he purchased in 1976. There he raised chickens, rabbits, and tumbling pigeons, and created a loving home where his family thrived. Even after the farm passed to his youngest son Ben, Joe continued to live there surrounded by the life and memories they had built together.

An avid genealogist, Joe built one of the largest private family history databases in existence. His passion for connecting generations reflected his deep appreciation for family and legacy.

Above all, Joe's life was defined by his faithful service to Christ, his unwavering commitment to his family, and his joyful service to the church. He leaves behind a legacy of faith, love, and generosity that will continue to bless generations to come.

Cemetery Details

Oak Hill Cemetery

2122 W. University St.
Siloam Springs, AR 72761

Previous Events

Funeral Service

MAY 10. 3:00 PM - 4:00 PM (CT)

Community Christian Fellowship
525 S. Lincoln
Siloam Springs, AR 72761

Burial

MAY 10 (CT)

Oak Hill Cemetery
2122 W. University St.
Siloam Springs, AR 72761

Tribute Wall

AR

“ Alan And Nancy Roller lit a candle in memory of Joseph Eldon Thurstenson



Alan and Nancy Roller - May 08 at 12:14 PM

SH

“ Stacey Hill lit a candle in memory of Joseph Eldon Thurstenson



Stacey Hill - May 08 at 07:16 AM

RK

“ Love to Awynne & family. I will miss having Joe send me out on genealogy searches whenever we frequently compared notes & he had a question I didn't have the answer to....which was frequently.

Mom will always remember Joey (Joe E.) as one of the chaperones on every date but 2 that she had with his cousin Dwayne. There was always a back seat full of chaperones - Eldon (as he was then called), his sister Twylla, and Mom's twin siblings Melvin, & Mary.

Holding you all in our thoughts & prayers.

Rene (Lindgren) Kantack & Betty Lou (Fotheringham) Lindgren

Rene (Lindgren) Kantack - May 07 at 03:56 PM



“ Peace, Prayers, & Blessings- Yellow and White was purchased for the family of Joseph Eldon Thurstenson.



May 07 at 10:45 AM



“ Classic Sympathy Dish Garden was purchased for the family of Joseph Eldon Thurstenson.



May 06 at 05:28 PM



“ All our love, The Sisters and families purchased the Floor Plant for Sympathy for the family of Joseph Eldon Thurstenson.



All our love, The Sisters and families - May 06 at 04:56 PM



“ All our love, The Sisters and families planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Joseph Eldon Thurstenson.

All our love, The Sisters and families - May 06 at 04:56 PM

DF

“ *Deann F. purchased the Red & White Sympathy Standing Spray for the family of Joseph Eldon Thurstenson.*



Deann F. - May 06 at 01:25 PM

AE

“ *Ashley, Zachary, Hunter & Elizabeth purchased the Red & White Sympathy Floor Basket for the family of Joseph Eldon Thurstenson.*



Ashley, Zachary, Hunter & Elizabeth - May 06 at 12:14 PM