



## Dr. Clarence Gilbert Falke

February 3, 1918 - April 14, 2020

Clarence Gilbert Falke; Beloved husband, father, grandfather, great-grandfather, brother, respected physician and member of the greatest generation, passed away in the early hours of April 14. He was 102 years of age.

Preferring to be called, Gilbert, or “Gil” by friends, he lived an extraordinary life of challenge and achievement. Born in Thorndale, TX, of a poor second-generation German immigrant family, he worked first as a delivery boy, farm hand and laborer, then as a shoe salesman and

bank teller. His ultimate goal, which might have seemed insurmountable to a less determined young man, was to put himself through medical school and become a doctor. While attending Temple Junior College, he met the love of his life, Theresa Elizabeth Bennett, of Temple. The couple married in 1939, and remained happily so for 66 years, until Theresa’s passing in 2005. She set out to work extra jobs and long hours to help her husband pursue his

medical education, but two years later, America entered World War II, and Gilbert had enlisted.

Hoping to become a pilot, he enrolled in the Army Air Corps and Officer Candidate School, but a minor deficiency in his peripheral vision meant that an alternative must be chosen if he wanted to fly. So he trained for and was commissioned a navigator bombardier, with the rank of lieutenant.

He was assigned to the 319th Bomb Group, which was twice awarded distinguished service citations. Strategic missions sent them to North Africa, the Mediterranean islands, Italy and Germany.

Returning from a mission during the Italian Campaign in 1944, Lt. Falke’s Martin B26 Marauder was shot down by German air defenses near the Po river in Northern Italy. He survived the crash landing with minimal injuries, but was severely burned over much of his body when his only escape was through a window over a flaming wing.

Burned over 70% of his body, he attempted to find cover in a nearby ditch, but an enemy patrol had seen the crash and took him prisoner “For you the war is over,” said a German soldier as he held a submachine gun to the prone lieutenant’s forehead. After medical treatment in a German hospital, Lt. Falke was transferred to the notorious prison camp,

Stalag Luft 7A near Moosburg in southern Bavaria. In starvation conditions, suffering from his injuries and a beating that permanently damaged his liver, he survived nearly a year of such imprisonment, until he and his fellow prisoners were liberated by General George S. Patton and the 3rd Army. One of Lt.

Falke's most cherished memories was being freed and getting to shake the famous general's hand. Repatriated, his health recovered and he was able to continue his education. He and his wife began their family with the birth of a son, Terrence, at Brooke Army Medical Center in 1950. In

1952, with a medical degree from the University of Texas Southwestern Medical School, and extra training as a surgeon, he moved his family to Dallas to serve 5 years at the VA hospital on Lancaster Boulevard. During which time, he and Theresa were blessed by the birth of a daughter, Linda. After this, he transferred to Methodist Central Hospital—specializing in general and vascular surgery. He became one of the longest serving physicians in the Methodist system's history, and was honored several times by his colleagues.

Dedicated to emergency care, Dr. Falke worked long hours, usually 7 days per week. After church on Sundays, he would often take his family with him when he made his rounds to visit hospitalized patients. A humble man of modest tastes, he wore inexpensive suits and drove cars until they wore out, and often provided his services for no or a reduced fee. He spent his entire life defending, healing and providing for others.

Dr. Falke, a lifelong Lutheran, was first a member of Grace Lutheran Church in Dallas, then the Cross of Christ Lutheran Church in Desoto, TX. He is survived by his two children, Terrence Falke, Linda (Falke) Harris, his granddaughter Summer Haffner, great-grandchildren, Norah and Rory Haffner, and his brother, Raymond Falke, Lt. Col. USAF (Ret.). No public service was held.

Dear Lord, hold this cherished man in your arms, grant him the heavenly reward he so richly deserves. May he be reunited with his beloved wife, Theresa, and eventually with those of us who love him so.

# Comments

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“ My name is Gary Alexander, Dr. Falke saved my life when I was a teenager. I spent months in the hospital under his care. I was not expected to live past 25, but with Dr. Falke's expert care I am now 64 and have a lovely family and a long successful career in landscaping.

**Gary Alexander** - June 06, 2020 at 11:32 AM

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“ I had the privilege of working with and for Dr Falke as a registered nurse in the 60's at Methodist Hospital. He was head and shoulders above any others as a surgeon and as a man. This world has lost a giant of a man. Although it's been many years since I saw him, I will miss knowing that he is no longer with us.  
Marsha Hurst Foster

**Marsha Foster** - May 30, 2020 at 06:12 PM

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“ Sorry to hear of the passing of your love one. We are so sorry that we have lost contact with our relatives. I believe I may have gotten to meet Gilbert one time. After the Falke Reunion ended, we have lost contact with so many cousins. Gilbert is now in his heavenly home. He lived a long and prosperous life. He is not gone, just away. He will live on in your hearts. God bless you and your family in this time of sorrow.



**Cynthia (Richter) & George Galbreath** - May 26, 2020 at 02:09 PM

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“ A true patriot, a loving husband, father and friend, a gifted surgeon, and tough as nails. Dallas was/is a better place because of Dr. Falke and it is fitting that his obituary appear in the DMN on Memorial Day weekend.

Dr. and Mrs. Falke were dear and favored friends of my parents, Frank & Elizabeth Crawford. Dad had so many wonderful things to speak of his friend. Dr. Falke, my father, and so many of their peers at Methodist Central were part of the Greatest Generation, not so much due to age, but because they were true heroes in every way; always giving, rarely complaining, taking little and always serving & putting others first.

I won't forget a procedure that Dr. Falke began by asking me, do you want me to numb this a little (skin graft)? I later asked Dad to please confirm that he was joking. Apparently he wasn't. (Glad I didn't know that before we got to his office...).

Dr. Falke will be sorely missed, but those close can rejoice in knowing that surely he was greeted with words similar to these upon entering into the presence of The Lord: "Well done, good and faithful servant (Matthew 25:23)".

Jimmy Crawford

Jimmy Crawford - May 25, 2020 at 04:43 PM

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“ I don't know you or your loved one- but I was so moved by his obituary that I shared it with all my family members and on Facebook. I have a high school senior and college student whose life is currently not going as planned. I have always talked to them about perseverance and resilience... Dr.Falke embodies all the best of that. This obit has blessed me and I hope all the people I have shared it with. Perfect for Memorial Day!

Elizabeth Slack - May 24, 2020 at 04:43 PM

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“ I never met Gil (as he liked to be called), however, in reading about him in the Dallas Morning News, I am very sorry that I did not. He was a fascinating man with great attitude and conviction. I know you were very proud of him

Susan Hull - May 24, 2020 at 01:58 PM

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“ Dr Falke was our family's doctor for many years. He would get things done in his office on the first visit that would take referrals, several office visits and a hospital stay in today's world. He was firm, and absolutely the best doctor I have ever known. May he be welcomed by God and may his family be given strength during this time. Markie George.

**Mark George** - May 24, 2020 at 06:18 AM

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“ Dr. Falke was a great man of faith. A very talented and skilled surgeon with a reputation for compassion that is second to none. I had always heard great things about him when I was a young member at Grace Lutheran in Oak Cliff and knew him later as a fellow member at Cross of Christ in DeSoto. There are a lot of great memories posted about him in Oak Cliff Boomers on FaceBook. Lots of people thought the world of Dr. Falke. One story a many, he saved my good friend's foot from amputation following a horrific motorcycle accident.

**Paul Tucker** - April 21, 2020 at 10:39 PM



“ I agree with Paul. Dr. Falke did many things for my family and always modest about his accomplishments. He will be missed for sure. It was always wonderful to see him at church and he was very faithful there until he could not drive any longer. God bless his family with peace and comfort in the days ahead as we celebrate his life and mourn his loss.

**Cynthia Huse** - April 22, 2020 at 02:49 PM



“ Dr. Falke, will be missed by those who knew him as a compassionate, dedicated surgeon. I was fortunate to have worked with him part-time in his office as well as caring for his immediate post operative patients while working in the Recovery Room at MHD. Although having worked with him closely, I really did not know of his experience while in the military. He is truly a gentleman to receive high honors during this Memorial Day Celebration.

We celebrate Dr. Falke as he is with his Heavenly Father and family that have preceded him in death. My condolences to the Falke family, Linda and Terrance and their families.  
Mary Lou (Ruffner) Willingham

**Mary Lou (Ruffner) Willingham** - May 25, 2020 at 01:17 AM

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“ I was hearbroken when I heard of Dr. Falke's passing. Such a well loved man for his dignity, intelligence, ethics, dedication, compassion and caring. He gave his all to his patients and family and I surely will miss just knowing he is no longer here among us. I also know he is at rest and in the arms of our Lord and keeping watch over us all. That's the kind of man & doctor he was.

I enjoyed our chats over the last few years and I will surely miss them.

My sincere condolences to Linda, Terry and the rest of his family.

Rest in Peace Dr Falke. We shall meet again one day. You lived your life well.



**Carol Hughes** - April 21, 2020 at 10:29 PM