



## Paul Nighswonger

April 14, 1923 - March 23, 2014

Paul Floyd Nighswonger was born in Alva, OK on April 14, 1923 to Howard Lewis and Lucie (Floyd) Nighswonger. He grew up on the Woods County farm, homesteaded in 1902 by his grandfather, Paul H. Nighswonger, surrounded by numerous extended family members and a special mentor, Louie Thurman. Eight years of grade school were completed at Greenleaf with Paul often driving himself to school. He attended high school at Horace Mann on the Northwestern campus. He began college at Northwestern, but in 1943, entered the Army, eventually earning rank of 1st Lieutenant as a B-17 co-pilot in the Army Air Corps. He particularly enjoyed his tour at Foggia, Italy, remembering stories and Italian words for the rest of his life. He finished college in 1949 and Elaine Moore became his bride on May 6, 1951. The couple settled on the home place 12 miles northwest of Alva. To this union six children were born.

In 1964, Paul and Elaine moved to Norman, Oklahoma where Paul began graduate school at the University of Oklahoma. After five years, he earned his PhD in Plant Ecology and was hired to teach at his alma mater, NWOSU. Paul found his true calling as a teacher, covering classes in botany, biology, genetics, ornithology, and a favorite, Resource Awareness. His colleague, Dan Shorter, was a lifelong friend, and the two experienced wonderful adventures taking students on local field trips, as well as out of state and even to Mexico. He retired from Northwestern in 1994.

Paul had many hobbies and interests, such as collecting stamps, flying airplanes, banding birds, collecting books and traveling. He was always ready to start a trip! He was an especially good photographer. His plant specimens at the OU Herbarium are known for their artistry. He was active in the community, serving on boards for the museum and his local rural water district. He was a long time member of the Oklahoma Academy of Science, Oklahoma Ornithological Society, and Oklahoma Native Plant Society. For many years, he taught Sunday school at Cedar Grove Wesleyan Church.

Paul died March 23, 2014 at Share Convalescent Center, completing a long life of 90 years, 11 months and 9 days. Preceding him in death were his parents, his sister, Grace Whitson, and an infant grandson, Mitch Sumner. He is survived by his wife, Elaine, of the home, children Carmen Eicken of Alva, Clara Nell (Ken) Siroky of Roy, Montana, Tom (Cynthia) Nighswonger of Alva, Howard (April) Nighswonger of Alva, Sally Nighswonger of Alva, and Alice Sumner of Evanston, Ill. Grandchildren are Clinton Nighswonger and fiancé Diana Neumeyer, Tyler (Lindsey) Nighswonger, Henry Nighswonger, all of Alva, Lewis Nighswonger of Sioux Center, Iowa, Susanna and Sam Siroky of Roy, Montana, and Lucinda and Ellen "Onnie" Sumner of Evanston, Illinois.

PDF Printable Version

# Previous Events

## Funeral Service

MAR 27. 2:00 PM (CT)

First United Methodist Church  
626 College Ave.  
Alva, Ok

# Tribute Wall

MS

“ *Dr. Nighswonger was a wonderful person and professor. A true Northwestern legend! He left this world a better place touching countless lives including mine.*

---

**Mark Steffen** - April 15, 2014 at 12:00 AM

JL

“ *Dr. Paul was one of a kind. Helpful to his students and shared his love of nature with us. He and I went to many Oklahoma Academy trips together, as well as Mexico. What fun we had. He will be missed.*

---

**Jim Lanier** - April 14, 2014 at 12:00 AM

MS

“ *Dr. Nighswonger was a learned man and I'll certainly miss him. I was on that trip to Mexico that is mentioned in his biography. He and Dr. Shorter were fun to travel with. By coincidence, he and I were in the same genetics class at OU. He was a great guy.*

---

**Michael Shuck** - April 14, 2014 at 12:00 AM

FR

“ *My thoughts and prayers are with you all. My mom Elizabeth Mosser Brannin grew up near the family. She enjoyed many visits and great conversations with Paul and his mother Lucie. May they all rest in peace.*

---

**Frances** - April 01, 2014 at 12:00 AM

LM

“ So sorry to hear of Paul's passing. I have many fond memories of being invited to their home place for hunting and fishing. I always remember Paul as being a kind and gentle man. I know my father, Joe, always held Paul in very high regard. Our condolences.

---

**Louis Melton** - March 27, 2014 at 12:00 AM

SS

“ Paul Nighswonger was a wonderful man, husband and father. He was my father, Laurence Floyd's first cousin. Paul obviously lived a good, productive life and was a man people admired. I am happy to have known him and extend my sympathies to all his family.

---

**Sinda Floyd Slagle** - March 27, 2014 at 12:00 AM

RF

“ Nighswonger family,  
My Mom grew up in the Greenleaf area and has fond memories of your family and hers neighboring. I went to school with Carmen and Clara Nell.  
So sorry for your loss and our prayers will be with you always.  
Delza (Parsons)Rodgers  
Lee and Pat (Rodgers) Canaday

---

**Rodgers and Canaday Families** - March 27, 2014 at 12:00 AM

KW

“ Although I didn't know him personally, I know all the loving, kind, and talented family he leaves behind. I know he will watch from heaven to enjoy all their accomplishments.

---

**Karleen White** - March 26, 2014 at 12:00 AM

DO

“ Sally and family, sorry for your loss. Dr. Nighswonger was a wonderful man and a great teacher. He was always so nice and friendly. I pray that God will be with you all and help you thru this time.

---

**Donise(Sterba)Cinnamon** - March 26, 2014 at 12:00 AM

LM

“ Dr. Paul had such a tremendous positive influence on all of his students. I was extremely blessed to have been one of them and considered him a worthy mentor. He is missed.

---

**Linda Myers** - March 26, 2014 at 12:00 AM

BB

“ I am saddened to hear of the passing of your husband/father. You are such a dear family. I pray God's comfort for all of you.

---

**Beth (Reynolds) Black** - March 25, 2014 at 12:00 AM

WE

“ Remembering many field trips, and also the mentoring, and friendship. Love Wes and Claudette

---

**Wesley and Claudette Ehrlich** - March 25, 2014 at 12:00 AM

LM

“ Sending love prayers and deepest sympathy to all the family.

---

**Linda murphy** - March 25, 2014 at 12:00 AM

WE

“ Please accept my deepest condolences on the passing of Paul. He was a great supporter of the Bebb Herbarium at OU, where we archive many of his incredibly-prepared plant specimens. Paul was a great mentor and naturalist, and was a generous and kind individual who will be missed greatly by those who had the pleasure of interacting with him.

---

**Wayne Elisens** - March 25, 2014 at 12:00 AM

EF

“ My thoughts and prayers are with you. God Bless.

---

**Elaine and family** - March 25, 2014 at 12:00 AM

TC

“ Dr. Nighswonger was my botany professor when I was a student at Northwestern State in the 1970s. He helped me to find my path when I was a struggling college student, and he taught me many more important lessons about life, such as accepting people for who they are and keeping my mind open to ideas. I will always be grateful to him, and am fortunate to have known him for many years.

---

**Terry R. Conley** - March 25, 2014 at 12:00 AM

WS

“ Sorry for your loss. My thoughts and prayers are with you.

---

**Wanda Severm** - March 25, 2014 at 12:00 AM

WS

“ Paul Nighswonger

---

**Wanda Severn** - March 25, 2014 at 12:00 AM

IE

“ Dear Nighswonger family, Paul was such a gentle soul. We are the richer for having known him. He hurts no more.

---

**Ida Evans** - March 24, 2014 at 12:00 AM

JB

“ I don't think I have to tell you what I thought of Paul. I consider him the greatest naturalist in the state of Oklahoma and I would rank him with the best in the nation. He was a kind, gentle and patient man who taught me much. Please accept condolences from Patty and me. If there is any way I can be of help, please let me know. I'll miss him greatly, as I know you will also.

---

**Jim Barker** - March 24, 2014 at 12:00 AM

JS

“ Always sad to lose a loved one, our prayers and sympathy are with you at this time of your loss. Paul was a good person, husband, father and grandpa, he will be missed very much.

---

**Joe and Joyce Scranton** - March 24, 2014 at 12:00 AM

DS

“ Our sincere sympathy in your loss. Praying each of you may find comfort in special memories; and may your hearts be warmed by the love which only our Lord can provide.

---

**Dale & Vaughna Schmidt** - March 24, 2014 at 12:00 AM