

## *William Stuart Tucker, Sr.*

We are gathered here this afternoon to bear witness to our faith in the resurrection, the resurrection of all who are buried in Jesus Christ the Lord, and the resurrection of William Stuart Tucker. Bill died on Friday morning after a short but intense illness – his prostate cancer had migrated to the bone. He was 83.

William Stuart Tucker was born in Petersburg, Virginia, in 1926, the middle of the three sons of Richard and Annetta Tucker. Bill's father was a produce and products broker with farmers. Later he had a peanut warehouse and shelling operation in Waverly, VA – until a fire burned the building and its unshelled peanuts to the ground. As Bill recorded in a biographical piece, the family was told you could smell burnt peanuts in Petersburg, 24 miles away!

Growing up in rural peanut country of south side Virginia was tough in those depression years. Bill went to work early, clerking in mercantile stores after school. In those first jobs Bill acquired knowledge of the business world, as his genetic stubbornness bumped into several employers who he felt didn't treat him fairly: in each case he quit to take another job rather than dicker over his pay.

By the time he graduated from high school in Stony Creek in 1943, Bill was ready to move on. He took a job with the department of state government now known as Virginia Department of Transportation, working on a surveying crew. Two and a half years later, Bill was in the US Navy. He was in Shanghai, China, when his father had a stroke. The Red Cross arranged for him to come home, a trip which included military flights, trains, and busses. Ever careful with his money, Bill noted that with the considerations given men in uniform, he made from China to Stony Creek, Va. for \$6.95. Bill's father died shortly thereafter. By year's end and the war over, Bill was back in civilian life.

Needing to take care of his newly widowed mother and younger brother, Bill went back to work rather than going to college on the GI Bill. Returning to VDOT, Bill moved up through the ranks, learning his engineering in the field and taking a degree in engineering through correspondence school. Eventually Bill was named an Urban Planning Engineer. Along the way Bill worked on various major highway projects, including the Powhite Parkway and the interstate highway system. Bill retired in 1985, after nearly 43 years of service with the commonwealth.

Bill felt blessed to have shared marital bliss with two women. Bill and Elizabeth Stanley Robinson married in 1949, and enjoyed 21 years of marriage together before her untimely death from a spinal cord tumor in 1970. Bill and Elizabeth had three children – a girl who died nine days after birth, and two sons, Stuart and Jim. Bill credited Elizabeth with the raising of their sons, as she combined homemaking and public school teaching.

In January 1972, a local bridge club was short a couple of players. Friends of Bill invited him to fill in. Marion Line and her husband Lloyd invited her cousin Maud Mizell to also fill in. The two lived within blocks of each other. Their sons had gone to school together and been in the same Scout troop. But the two bridge players were not even casual acquaintances. Love trumped the cards that night. Three months later Bill and Maud married, and enjoyed nearly 35 years of marriage together.

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In their retirement Bill and Maud formed a quiet couple who treasured gentle companionship. Weeks at the beach. Reading – sometimes a 100 books a year. A night at the theatre. Dinner with good friends. Traveling around Virginia. Doing the daily crossword and jumble puzzles.

Bill also enjoyed cooking. Bill made candy coated peanuts and other delicacies and shared them with his friends. Bill cooked, and often through his cooking offered a ministry of care and compassion for friends and church members in need. Including cooking Christmas Dinner for his pastor and children the year my wife was away caring for her gravely ill mother.

Bill was a careful and fastidious man. Mindful of his past, but also interested in the present as well. He was a man who laid down principles and stuck to them. For example, early in his marriage, he and his wife decided to only buy quality furniture. They didn't have much of it for a time, but what they acquired lasted a lifetime.

Bill was proud of his sons and his stepsons, and like all grandparents, he was especially proud of the accomplishments of his grandchildren. He also made lasting impressions on them, somehow bridging the gap between a son of the depression and the world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. His grandson Harrison, who cannot be here today because he is serving with the Peace Corps in Central America, would share this recent conversation he had with his grandfather:

“I remember most the discussion we had the last time I was in Richmond, in February this year when you shared the significant in your life with me. Trying to tease out advice for an impressionable 23 year old grandson, I probed into your past and you let me follow. You could barely tell me about the women in your life because you were so overwhelmed with a terrible and wonderful nostalgia, a nostalgia designated to the survivor of two wives. But you did tell me about them and how my grandmother was renting a room from your mother when you met. And how you and Maud had spent so many happy years together. You told me how wonderful they were and how thankful you are. You could barely contain the tears. And it struck me how much of a feat that is, to have had *two* successful relationships. That, I think is a beautiful thing.”

Bill Tucker was born and baptized a Methodist, and active in various Methodist Churches over the first half of his life. After marrying the Presbyterian Maud Mizell, he joined Bon Air Presbyterian Church, where he was a long time faithful member. More significantly, Bill lived in gratitude to God for the blessings of life he enjoyed, and sought to share those blessings with others through his own life of discipleship.

Bill was preceded in death by one brother and his two wives, Elizabeth and Maud. He is survived by his brother, Richard Tucker and his wife Jane; two sons, William Stuart Tucker, Jr, and his wife Julie, and James R. Tucker and his wife Cathy; two stepsons, Richard J. Mizell and his wife Bonnie, and Robert B. Mizell; and six grandchildren; an extended family and a large circle of friends.

Having gathered for our mutual support and comfort and to hear the witness of the scriptures, let us worship God:

R. Charles Grant  
Bon Air Presbyterian Church  
Richmond, Virginia  
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