



Virgil Ernest Haley

February 1, 1926 - July 29, 2026

VIRGIL ERNEST HALEY

FEB 1, 1926 – JULY 29, 2026

Virgil Ernest Haley passed peacefully into the arms of Jesus on July 29, 2026, surrounded by his family. He was 100 years old. His life was marked by unwavering faith, quiet strength, devoted service, and a love for his family that will continue to bear fruit for generations.

Virgil was born on February 1, 1926, in Tonkawa, Oklahoma. He was the fourth child, and only son, of Ernest Macellon Haley and Kate Marguerette Asfahl Haley. In August 1929, Virgil moved with his parents and four sisters to Roswell, New Mexico, where the family farmed and operated Haley Green Valley Market on East 2nd Street. He graduated from Roswell High School in 1944 and enlisted in the United States Navy immediately after graduation. Virgil's faith was continually built on his commitment to his Savior made at the age of 14. That commitment became the foundation upon which he lived the next eighty-six years.

Virgil served as a Quartermaster Third Class aboard the USS Williams during World War II. While enduring one of the most violent typhoons in naval history, the USS Williams rolled past 90 degrees and recovered without sinking—only the second ship in history to do so. The only sailor lost in the incident was at

Virgil's battle station. Virgil had just been relieved from that post and gone below deck when the ship began to roll. As he climbed the wall, he prayed for protection. As Virgil tells the story, God heard that prayer, and prevented the ship from sinking. He was honorably discharged in June 1946.

Virgil married the love of his life, Thelma Allene Durbin, on June 5, 1948, in Roswell. Together they raised six sons, though there always seemed to be many more gathered around their dinner table.

Virgil farmed on the east side of Roswell for 13 years before moving to the west side, where he farmed for another 38 years. Beginning with his first pecan trees in 1963, he spent decades planting and nurturing Western Schley pecan orchards that eventually grew to more than 270 acres. In 1984 he leased the family farm to his son Bruce, who continues the family farming tradition today. In 1995, Virgil, Bruce, and neighboring farmers Bill and Bobby Bonham purchased the Mountain States Pecan Orchard, expanding their work to more than 900 additional acres. He was a proud member of the Western Pecan Growers Association for over thirty years.

Life also brought profound sorrow. On March 15, 1986, Virgil and Allene's fifth son, Chris, was killed by a drunk driver. Chris's truck has remained on display at the family farm for decades as a reminder of the devastating consequences of impaired driving.

Virgil served on the Farmer's Co-op Board, the Roswell First Church of the Nazarene Board for sixty years, the New Mexico Nazarene District Advisory Board for ten years, and the Bonita Park Camp and Conference Center Board for thirty years. He and his family faithfully attended Roswell First Church of the Nazarene for more than ninety-five years. Alongside Allene, he taught Sunday School, worked with youth, served on numerous committees, and helped build or remodel all three locations of the church. In 2009 he received

the Distinguished Service Award from Roswell First Church of the Nazarene. Today, four generations of the Haley family continue to worship there. One of the stories he loved to tell was how they needed more room for Sunday School classes at the church on Washington and Eighth, so they dug a basement beneath the existing building using a tumblebug implement.

Virgil also devoted countless hours to Bonita Park Camp and Conference Center in Angus, New Mexico. He helped develop the water system, acquire much needed additional water rights, build the gymnasium, and construct the zip line and climbing wall. He was awarded Layman of the Year by Bonita Park and, in 1977, became the first recipient of the New Mexico District Church of the Nazarene Distinguished Service Award.

His heart for missions carried him around the world through Work & Witness projects, where he helped build churches, schools, and mission facilities. Whether converting a school bus into a mobile dental clinic for Guatemala or building and transporting a sawmill to Papua New Guinea to provide lumber for churches, Virgil's service was tireless. He made many trips to Peru and had a deep heart for the Garman missionaries serving there. Along with helping build many churches deep in the Amazon jungle, he supplied the funds to build a water system that now provides free water from a natural flowing stream high on a mountain to the missionary compound and seminary at Nuevo Horizonte. The list of places he visited for Work & Witness includes Peru, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Russia, Alaska, Papua New Guinea, Ireland, New Zealand, New England, Indonesia, and Honduras.

Virgil simply viewed work as another way to serve God.

Allene passed away in May 2004. Virgil was later blessed to marry Lillian Ruth Hays, Allene's sister.

In 2011, Virgil was honored by the Historical Society for Southeast New Mexico for his many contributions to the community.

Those who knew Virgil remember a man who rarely sought recognition, preferred serving over being recognized, and quietly lived the faith he professed. More than the orchards he planted, the churches he helped build, or the honors he received, Virgil's greatest legacy lives in the faith, integrity, and servant's heart he planted in those who knew and loved him.

Virgil is survived by his wife, Lillian; sons Eugene (Wayelene) Haley, Terry (Jeralyn) Haley, and Bruce (Reba) Haley, all of Roswell, New Mexico, and Todd Haley of Fort Lauderdale, Florida; twelve grandchildren; thirty-one great-grandchildren; and many nieces, nephews, cousins, and cherished friends.

He was preceded in death by his parents; his beloved wife, Allene; two of his sons Russell and Chris; and his sisters Juanita Hadder Kilpatrick, Levita Gauntt, Wilma Troutman, and Iva Dell Ferrell.

A viewing will be held at Anderson Bethany Funeral Home & Crematory on Saturday, August 8, from 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM. A funeral service will be held on Sunday, August 9, 2026, at 3:00 p.m. at First Church of the Nazarene, 501 N. Sycamore, Roswell, New Mexico. A graveside service will be held on Monday. Pallbearers will be Eugene Haley, Terry Haley, Bruce Haley, Todd Haley, Byron Haley, Jeffrey Haley, Michael Haley, and Jason Pope.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to First Church of the Nazarene—Missions, 501 N. Sycamore, Roswell, NM 88201, or to Bonita Park Camp and Conference Center, 200 Bonita Park Road, Angus, NM 88316.

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."

— II Timothy 4:7

Previous Events

Viewing

AUG **8**. 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM (MT)

Anderson-Bethany Funeral Home and Crematory
2609 South Main
Roswell, NM 88203
(575) 622-5888
abfh@andersonbethany.com

Funeral Service

AUG **9**. 3:00 PM (MT)

First Church of Nazarene
501 N Sycamore Ave
Roswell, NM 88201-1700

Tribute Wall

SS

“ Virgil was a great guy with a huge heart. Kelly & I had him & Lillian over for dinner one night & we just sat & talked for hours. He taught me how to weld, could learn a lot from a guy like Virgil. Love you Lillian, so sorry, Steve

steve Sanborn - August 09 at 04:35 PM

“ For one hundred years
This sailor has stood the watch
While some of us were in our bunks at night
This sailor stood the watch

While some of us were in school learning our trade
This shipmate stood the watch

Yes.. even before some of us were born into this world
This shipmate stood the watch

In those years when the storm clouds of life were seen brewing on
the horizon of history
This shipmate stood the watch

Many times he would cast an eye ashore and see his family
standing there
Needing his guidance and help
Needing that hand to hold during those hard times
But he still stood the watch

He stood the watch for one hundred years
He stood the watch so that we, our families and
Our fellow countrymen could sleep soundly in safety, Each and
every night
Knowing that this sailor stood the watch

Today we are here to say
'Shipmate... the watch stands relieved
Relieved by those you have trained , Guided, and Led
Shipmate you stand relieved.. we have the watch..."

"Boatswain..Standby to pipe the side...Shipmate's going to
Heaven.."

TF

“ *The Brown Family. purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of Virgil Ernest Haley.*



The Brown Family. - August 06 at 06:28 PM

YF

“ *Your Noah's Ark Family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Virgil Ernest Haley.*

Your Noah's Ark Family - August 05 at 07:27 AM

YF

“ *Your Noah's Ark Family purchased the Large Basket Garden for the family of Virgil Ernest Haley.*



Your Noah's Ark Family - August 05 at 07:27 AM

MF

“ *Melanie wilsonand jim and family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Virgil Ernest Haley.*

Melanie wilsonand jim and family - August 04 at 11:06 AM

MF

“ *Melanie wilsonand jim and family purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of Virgil Ernest Haley.*



Melanie wilsonand jim and family - August 04 at 11:06 AM

AT

“ *On behalf of the Historical Society for Southeast New Mexico thoughts and prayers to the Haley family!*



Amy McVay Tellez - August 04 at 12:28 AM