



Douglas Williams Thorley

September 27, 1928 - March 10, 2021

Douglas Williams Thorley, age 92, passed away on March 10, 2021, in New Harmony, Utah, surrounded by family at his bedside.

He was born on September 27, 1928, in Cedar City, Utah, to William Stewart and Mary Ann Williams Thorley. He was preceded in death by his parents, siblings: Claudia, Ferron, Richard, Jessie Rae, and Colleen, daughter Gail, son-in-law Roger Bringhurst and wife Dorothy Newton. He is survived by his daughters: Lynne Harnois (Robert) of St. George, UT, Kerrie Bringhurst of New Harmony, UT, and Jan DellaVedova (Jack) of Colville, WA. Doug had 14 grandchildren and 31 great grandchildren.

Doug had many fond memories of growing up in Cedar City and thought highly of his loving family and childhood friends. He enjoyed his hobby of raising pigeons and had a passion for riding horses. In his high school years, he discovered his love for cars. He built and modified his first car and started street racing at age 16.

After graduation from Cedar High School, he moved to California where he enlisted in the Navy/Air Corp Reserves. He was honorably discharged in 1949, and began plastering with his brother Dick. That same year he married Dorothy Elizabeth Bell (later divorced) and they are the parents of his four daughters. He began his racing career at this time at the southern California drag strips. In 1958, he and then wife Bette Bentley started his header company, Doug's Headers, a leading producer of exhaust systems.

Doug established himself as a renowned hot rodder and business man. In

1967, he won the first NHRA Nationals Funny Car Eliminator Title at the Indy Raceway. Car Craft Magazine named him to their All Star Drag Racing Team and Funny Car Driver of the Year. Hot Rod Magazine describes him as “one of drag racing’s most famous early era drivers.” Doug was inducted into several racing Hall of Fames. Some of his more notable cars were a Chevy Nova called Chevy Too Much, and his altered Corvair which was the first to break the 200 mph mark at Lions Drag Strip. Doug also raced at the Bonneville Salt Flats in his Corvette X and was the holder of many long-standing records. After his racing career, he was awarded the coveted NHRA Wally Award for his contributions to the racing community which is on display at Cedar City High School.

In his later years, Doug had a passion for his ranch in New Harmony and he and his wife, Dorothy Newton, spent many years there with their animals and beloved view of the Kolob Canyons. He rode on many trail rides and cougar hunts on his favorite horse, Gyp.

In the last few years, Doug had been struggling with advancing age. One of his favorite sayings was, “Whatever you do, don’t get old!” When asked how he was doing, his instant answer was “Perfecto!” One of his great blessings in these last few years has been his dear friend and companion, Helen Flannigan.

A graveside service will be held at the Cedar City Cemetery on Monday, March 15, 2021, at 11:00 a.m. and afterward, a celebration of life and family gathering at the Bringhurst home in New Harmony.

Cemetery Details

Cedar City Cemetery

685 N. Main Street
Cedar City, UT

Previous Events

Graveside Service

MAR 15. 11:00 AM (MT)

Cedar City Cemetery
685 N. Main Street
Cedar City, UT

Tribute Wall

MS

“ A good Man and a pleasure to do business with; we worked with Doug for a couple years as subcontractors for his Tri-y header mfg. He took a liking to an AMT 1/24th scale model that I built as a young teen...of his '41 Willys of Course in his fave Orange color ! He couldn't get his eyes off of it, so I gifted it to him on the spot. Rev in Peace Doug.

Martin Schneider - August 08, 2023 at 03:14 PM

DH

“ My dad and Doug have been buddy's since the 50's. In fact, my brother was named after Doug. Sorry for your loss
Debbie Hughes-Miller

Debbie Hughes-Miller - March 22, 2021 at 05:06 PM

TA

“ I witnessed his historic win at the 1967 NHRA National Championship Drag Races.



Timothy Airney - March 18, 2021 at 11:03 AM

TA

I witnessed his win at the 1967 NHRA Indianapolis Championship Drag Races.

Timothy Airney - March 18, 2021 at 11:06 AM

DH

“ Prayers from Kentucky

dave huber - March 18, 2021 at 09:17 AM



“ Had many sets of your headers< RIP>

Philip Fermo - March 18, 2021 at 08:58 AM

PB

“ Words cannot put my feelings on this loss. I was honored to know Doug, and even more so to have built the tribute of his winning Corvair drag car. Heaven has the best header builder on the Lord's drag racing team. RIP my friend. I will see you in eternal life.



Paul Brown - March 18, 2021 at 08:49 AM

RR

“ Doug was a remarkable man with talents and skills and friends with lots of people.. Very Professional in his dealings. I appreciated visiting with him about racing and things that made cars/trucks go even faster.. I feel really blessed to have known Doug. May our Heavenly Father Bless and Comfort the family.

Sincerely

Roger Robinson
Parowan, Utah

Roger Robinson - March 13, 2021 at 08:04 PM