



Dr. Dahlard Lukes PhD

April 24, 1933 - January 27, 2025

Dr. Dahlard Lukes PhD, distinguished mathematician and beloved family man, passed away peacefully on January 27th, 2025, in Blacksburg, Virginia, surrounded by his loving family.

Born April 24th, 1933, to Lawrence and Josephine Lukes in Austin, Minnesota, Dahlard grew up on the family farm alongside his brother Dale and sisters Lone and Julie. Life during the Depression era was challenging, with farming still done by horse-drawn equipment rather than tractors. These early experiences instilled in Dahlard the values of hard work and self-sufficiency that would guide him throughout his life. Despite the demanding farm work, he pursued his passion for music, mastering both the saxophone and accordion. His musical talent led him to perform with the National FFA (Future Farmers of America) Band and with his own ensemble at local schools and dance halls. After graduating from Glennville High School in 1951, Dahlard's intellectual curiosity drew him toward mathematics and engineering. He began his academic journey at Austin Junior College, where his exceptional analytical abilities emerged earning him an Associate Degree in Arts in 1953. This led him to the University of Minnesota, where he earned his Bachelor of Science in Mathematics.

During his university years, Dahlard met the love of his life, Marlene Carol Morgan, on a double date with his cousin Dean and Marlene's best friend Charlotte. Sharing a love of music and dancing, they spent countless evenings at the Terp Ballroom in Austin, dancing to the big band music of the

era—memories Dahlard would cherish throughout his life. They married on June 26th, 1954, and were blessed with four children: sons Guy and Brad, and daughters Luanne and Alisa. Their loving partnership continued until Marlene's passing in 1998.

Following graduation, Dahlard's mathematical expertise led him to Rocketdyne in Southern California, where he and Marlene embarked on their new life together packing up their 1952 Mercury and headed west towing their wedding gift—a 20-foot Airstream trailer. At Rocketdyne, he contributed to NASA's Mercury and Gemini space programs, even witnessing the test firing of early rocket prototypes.

His passion for mathematics eventually drew him back to academia. He returned to the University of Minnesota, earning his PhD in 1967. His academic career flourished through a postdoctoral position at the University of Wisconsin's Math Research Center, followed by an associate professorship at the University of Virginia in 1969. At UVA, he distinguished himself through his teaching, research publications, and his 1982 book "Differential Equations -- Classical to Controlled." He served with distinction until his retirement.

In retirement, Dahlard continued his mathematical research while embracing his love of nature. He maintained extensive gardens near his rural Charlottesville home, tending to trees, flowers, blueberries, and vegetables—a testament to his farming roots. His adventurous spirit led him to explore numerous National Parks, including Yosemite, Zion, Glacier, Sequoia, and Joshua Tree.

Above all, Dahlard found his greatest joy in family life: as husband to Marlene, father to Guy, Luanne, Brad, and Alisa, grandfather to Paul, Angela, Ceci, Jonathan, Shayne, Emma, and Sam, and great-grandfather to Oz, Wade, Ronan, and Harrison. He leaves behind a legacy of love and learning and will be deeply missed by his family and a great many others who knew him. In lieu of flowers, the family kindly requests that donations be made to the Alzheimer's Association in memory of Dahlard Lukes.

Tribute Wall

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“ Rest in peace Dahlard, our colleague and close friend over many years at UVa. What joined us, as a strong personal and professional link, was not only a shared passion for mathematics, but also - not less important - our great appreciation for your moral and ethical view at the personal and collective level; together with a strong sense of duty and hard work. In particular, we were much impressed by your highly regarded math book "Differential Equations: Classical to Controlled"; which we used ourselves in our classes, both at UVa and later at the University of Memphis; as well as in our research.

We fondly remember the many evenings we spent together over dinner, at first with you and Marlene. We were deeply struck by the unexpected loss of Marlene, and most closely shared your grief, and your four beautiful children's. Since we left UVa in 2013, we at first kept in touch, but as years passes by, life inevitably pushed us away in the daily routine; but not in our feelings and our remembrances. We were often wondering about your whereabouts. Till the sad news came.

May your personal and professional example inspire the new generation.
We shall deeply miss you. Your friend for ever,
Irena Lasiecka and
Roberto Triggiani

Roberto Triggiani - May 05, 2025 at 04:33 PM