



Dr. Eldred Leslie Williams Jr.

November 18, 1965 - July 10, 2014

Eldred Leslie Williams, Jr., 48, of Seneca, South Carolina, died unexpectedly on July 10, 2014, in Greenville, South Carolina.

Leslie was a native Floridian, born in Tallahassee on November 18, 1965. He graduated from Lincoln High School in 1984; earned a double degree in Asian Studies and International Affairs (Phi Beta Kappa) from Florida State University in 1988; a Master of Arts in Anthropology from Florida State University in 1990; and a Ph.D. in Cultural Anthropology from the University of Pittsburgh in 1997. From 1991 to 1993, he served with distinction as a Monbushô Graduate Research Scholar through the Japanese Ministry of Education at Kyushu University in Fukuoka, Japan, where his research focused on the history of Japan's Edo Period. He also performed extensive graduate fieldwork at the Hakozaki Shrine in Fukuoka, Japan; was a Visiting Professor at Nagoya University in Nagoya, Japan; and served his church for two years as a full-time missionary in Taiwan. He spoke six languages and embraced all others.

For the past 15 years, Leslie was an Associate Professor of Japanese in the Department of Languages at Clemson University. He also served for the past three years as Director of the University's Language & International Trade Program. His academic research focused on Japanese pedagogy, Shintô rituals, pre-Meiji Japanese history, Taoist cosmology, and Taoist health maximization practices. He was honored on two occasions to be designated an Outstanding Clemson Professor by the University's Student Government.

In 2007, he published his first book, *Spirit Tree: Origins of Cosmology in Shintô Ritual at Hakozaki*. At the time of his death, he was finalizing two other books for publication and preparing his application to become a full Professor at Clemson. Before moving to Clemson, he held faculty positions at Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah; and Washington & Lee University, Lexington, Virginia.

In each of his academic endeavors, Leslie made treasured, life-long friends of his students and colleagues. He was especially proud of his students in the Japanese language, culture, history, and literature courses he enjoyed so much at Clemson, and also the Institute, Sunday School, Priesthood, and young men's classes he taught for many years at church.

Leslie is survived by Michelle, his wife of 25 years, and their three children: Emmy (21), Bethany (17), and Ethan (13); his father Leslie, Sr., of Tallahassee; brother Fred (and his wife Samantha) of Austin, Texas; sister Margaret (and her husband Whitney) of Colorado Springs, Colorado; sister Joy (and her husband Scott) of Sugar Land, Texas; brother Joel (and his wife Kristy) of Hangzhou, China; nine nephews—Maxwell, Adam, Spencer, Carter, Grant, Hunter, Thomas, Charlie, and Elliot; and three nieces—Olivia, Grace, and Catherine. He was preceded in death by his mother, Dr. Joyce Wolfgang Williams.

Leslie loved his family with all his heart, his students and dear friends (just as much), his enormous library (and everybody else's), enunciating, Japan, expressing his love by cooking every cuisine (preferably for a crowd), staying in touch, the Pedro Patrol, teaching moments, self-improvement, do-it-yourself sushi, history and cultures of all kinds, Greek mythology, South American archaeology, scripture study, woodblock prints, the apostle Paul, healthy choices, early-morning classes, vigorous physical exercise, Taekwondo, Scouting, purple irises, ferns, moss gardens with stone lanterns, sushi in all its delicious forms, Cervantes, Skype, tai chi at 5 a.m. on the front lawn, vintage Japanese TV shows, the remake of *Freaky Friday*, and giving short backrubs. We will miss him until we see him again.

The family will receive visitors from 6:00 to 8:00 pm, on Sunday, July 13, at Davenport Funeral Home, 311 S Carolina Highway 11, West Union, South Carolina 29696. The funeral service will be held at 11:00 am on Monday, July 14, at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 5003 Wells Highway, Seneca, South Carolina 29678.

Previous Events

Funeral Service

JUL 14. 11:00 AM (ET)

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints
5003 Wells Hwy
Seneca, SC

Tribute Wall



“ *Dr. Eldred Leslie Williams Jr.*

January 28, 2023 at 01:03 PM



“ *There are so many wonderful memories of Leslie, starting with a full summer of playing four square, Spanish class, and who can forget his performance in My Fair Lady! What a unique, creative, and special human being Leslie was! He was one of a kind and embraced himself, others, and the things he cared about. He made an impact on everyone who knew him at Lincoln High School in the 1980s.*

Joellen Thiel - July 26, 2021 at 08:35 PM



“ *I do not know Dr. Eldred Leslie Williams Jr. personally but I came across his studies during my research. I am sure the vigor, depth and originality of his intellectual pursuit continue to inspire and enrich many more who are touched by his works. May his memory be a blessing.*



Shan Zeng - November 03, 2018 at 02:46 PM



“ *Shan Zeng lit a candle in memory of Dr. Eldred Leslie Williams Jr.*



Shan Zeng - November 03, 2018 at 02:42 PM

Kevin
Carlos
Canova

“ I was a Church member friend all of my teen years with Les Williams...His Father was my Bishop, His family was so much fun and remember the Hayrides at there place. Les was a Great young leader in the boy Scouts. I remember he was the 1st guy to get the Eagle Scout award; I am shocked to find this out ...& sorry I missed his funeral.

Kevin Carlos Canova - March 22, 2016 at 01:40 AM

DM

“ I learned today in a Christmas card from Leslie's sister, Margaret, of his untimely death. I am shocked. I was a student of his mother, Dr. Joyce Williams at FSU many years ago and remained her friend until her death. I met Leslie as a boy and followed his growth and development for a number of years. I know how proud both his mother and father were of his many achievements. The tributes on this page from his students are both moving and painful as so many are struggling with his sudden death. My wife, Donna, joins in sending our deepest condolences to his wife, children, father, and extended family

Dan McGehee - December 24, 2014 at 03:15 PM

LS

“ Our thoughts and prayers go out to all the Williams family. My sisters Nancy and Judy and I have many fond memories of the times our families were together. Our parents and Leslie's parents had a cherished friendship through all the years. James and I will always remember Leslie being the ring bearer in our wedding in 1971 --- the cute little gentleman at age 5. With Deepest Sympathy, James & Linda Smith Quincy, FL

Linda Smith - August 06, 2014 at 04:52 AM

CG

“ *Dr. Williams was the director of the L&IT program during my senior year at Clemson but I recently got to know him more personally as an alumni participant at the annual L&IT conference and dinner. He was such a warm and welcoming person and it was easy to tell that he really had a great passion for teaching and genuinely cared about his students both during their time at Clemson and as alumni. I loved listening to his stories about his time in Japan during the dinner and admired his appreciation for all cultures. He was such a great role-model for his students at Clemson and he will be missed!*

Celena Gordon - July 15, 2014 at 01:00 PM



“ *Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Dr. Eldred Leslie Williams Jr..*



July 15, 2014 at 07:30 AM

 Karen
Trapane

“ *Leslie and I were high school classmates. I remember him as always being calm and smiling. He was kind and soft spoken. It was always a pleasure to talk to him in class or out and about. The world lost a man who inspired many and who was loved by all. My well wishes go to your family Leslie. Condolences.*

Karen Trapane - July 14, 2014 at 10:55 PM

TS

“ *My deepest sympathies to Leslie's family. I was a classmate of Leslie's at Lincoln. We weren't necessarily friends, nor did we have terribly much in common, but I always found Leslie to be a very genuine and nice person. It is a tribute to him, that he could inspire positive feelings to mere acquaintances. What a fine individual. So sorry for your loss.*

Todd Sears - July 14, 2014 at 10:58 AM

TK

“ *Toshiko K. purchased the Memories to Treasure for the family of Dr. Eldred Leslie Williams Jr..*



Toshiko K. - July 14, 2014 at 08:58 AM

YK

“ *Yuji & Toshiko Kishimoto purchased the Joyful Memory for the family of Dr. Eldred Leslie Williams Jr..*



Yuji & Toshiko Kishimoto - July 14, 2014 at 08:58 AM

MJ

“ *We are constantly lifting you all up in prayer, knowing that this is the most difficult trial you have had to endure. God is with you. Leslie is with Him. We love you all and continue to pray for God's comfort and healing for you all.*

Miriam & Lee Johnson

Miriam S. Johnson - July 14, 2014 at 08:34 AM

DS

“ Department of Languages Faculty and Staff purchased the Loving Grace for the family of Dr. Eldred Leslie Williams Jr..



Department of Languages Faculty and Staff - July 14, 2014 at 08:16 AM

Leigh Roddenberry Brocks

“ To the Family Of Leslie,
Long before we're ready,
We sadly say goodbye,
But there are those in a far more beautiful
place
who are saying



"Welcome Home".

Leigh Roddenberry-Brocks - July 14, 2014 at 07:45 AM



“ Being a Japanese major at Clemson University, Williams-sensei was my guide through thick-and-thin. He was always so positive and there for me. He was so inspirational as he made his lessons come alive. It's because of him that I am living my dream and leading a successful life here in Japan. I will always remember his great classes, friendly personality, traveling with the Kyoto group, and the motivational messages he shared whenever any of us had a worry. I will always remember you, Williams-sensei, and continue to make you proud. My heart goes out to his family during these hard times.



Lindsay Pellerin - July 14, 2014 at 07:40 AM



“ *Imagination Blooms was purchased for the family of Dr. Eldred Leslie Williams Jr..*



July 14, 2014 at 04:08 AM



“ *Celestial Love was purchased for the family of Dr. Eldred Leslie Williams Jr..*



July 13, 2014 at 10:28 PM



“ *Even though we live right next door to the Williams', we only read about his death this evening. We are just so sorry for the family and friends of Leslie - everyone who is touched by his loss. There are just no words to adequately convey our feelings. Pat & Roger*

Pat Knowles - July 13, 2014 at 10:18 PM



“ *Williams-Sensei was an incredible Japanese instructor and ambassador for the understating of Japanese culture. He was the most energetic teacher I had at Clemson, and he taught me the mental discipline I needed to mature and grow as a student and as an individual.*

Christopher Cox - July 13, 2014 at 08:53 PM

DS

“ Leslie was a super talented actor and singer in the Lincoln High School choral program and Broadway musicals. He was respected and loved by all. He will be missed by many.
Dr. A. Byron Smith, retired Choral Director.

Dr. A. Byron Smith - July 13, 2014 at 08:18 PM

JT

“ Leslie and I were graduate students together at Pitt and spent a lot of time talking about Japan and other things. We shared rooms at conferences and he and his family visited us once in Austin. Leslie was a wonderful person, colleague, and friend. I will miss him greatly. John Traphagan

John Traphagan - July 13, 2014 at 06:10 PM

RA

“ Raquel Anido purchased the Love's Journey for the family of Dr. Eldred Leslie Williams Jr..



Raquel Anido - July 13, 2014 at 05:24 PM



“ Cheryl's Classic Gift Bundle was purchased for the family of Dr. Eldred Leslie Williams Jr..



July 13, 2014 at 04:05 PM

DC

“Michelle, Bethany, and family,
We are saddened for your loss. Please know you all are in our
thoughts and prayers!
Debbie and Ken Cox and Parker

Debbie Cox - July 13, 2014 at 01:39 PM

FZ

“Leslie had a powerful combination of humility, intellect and
compassion. Although we'd recently met, I was eager to know him
better. A loss for us all on this side of the veil but he must be busy
greeting and serving there as well.

Fred Zirkle - July 13, 2014 at 01:34 PM

CB

“Dr. Williams was my Japanese professor for 3 years at Clemson. I
participated in his study abroad program in Kyoto and took every
culture class that he offered. He pushed me, like no other mentor
I've ever had, to be the best version of myself in every aspect of my
life. When I suddenly lost my assistantship during my last year of
graduate school, Sensei created an assistantship for me in the
Language and International Trade program. That was the kind of
man he was. He did everything in his power to make sure his
students succeeded, as if we were a part of his family. I am so
deeply thankful to have had such a brilliant role model in my life. My
thoughts and prayers are with his family during this difficult time.

Cory Buckley - July 13, 2014 at 01:21 PM



“ *A Full Life was purchased for the family of Dr. Eldred Leslie Williams Jr..*



July 13, 2014 at 01:03 PM



“ *Barbara Zaczek purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Dr. Eldred Leslie Williams Jr..*



Barbara Zaczek - July 13, 2014 at 12:57 PM



“ *Dr. Williams was one of the most influential professors this year at Clemson. He was the one person I could go to for advice. Every time I saw him, he was full of joy and pleading to help me in anyway he could. He brought a sense of calm to me that other professors/advisors couldn't. Prayers for the family. What a tragic loss. Gods Peace*

Forrest Hemphill - July 13, 2014 at 12:40 PM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Dr. Eldred Leslie Williams Jr..*



July 13, 2014 at 12:30 PM

EL

“ Eric Touya & Ye Luo purchased the America the Beautiful for the family of Dr. Eldred Leslie Williams Jr..



Eric Touya & Ye Luo - July 13, 2014 at 12:09 PM

GG

“ Gabi Stoicea and Lucian Ghita purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Dr. Eldred Leslie Williams Jr..



Gabi Stoicea and Lucian Ghita - July 13, 2014 at 12:06 PM



“ Misty Dawn lit a candle in memory of Dr. Eldred Leslie Williams Jr.



Misty Dawn - July 13, 2014 at 11:49 AM



In all my 20 years of being 'in school' Williams-Sensei was the strongest example of everything that a teacher ever could be, not just to me, but to all the hundreds of students who knew him. He showed energy, determination, and compassion in and out of the classroom. He helped many of us through some of the hardest times, offering a prayer and a hug when we didn't know we needed them. He pushed us to heights we never knew we could achieve, cheering us all the way, and still felt he could do more. We will carry his memory, kindness and influence with us through our lives wherever we go.

Williams-Sensei, Domo Arigato Gozaimashita.

Mlsty Dawn - July 13, 2014 at 11:51 AM

JL

“ Jeff Love purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of Dr. Eldred Leslie Williams Jr..



Jeff Love - July 13, 2014 at 10:26 AM

LR

“ Jesse Richards was in the group from Clemson that was in Kyoto, Japan from May 4 - July 4. He stayed on in Fukui, Japan for an internship, and will return to Irmo, SC Aug 4. As Jesse's parents, we can attest to the grief experienced at the news of their dear professor's sudden death; "He was the best teacher, ever!" We share in those sentiments and pray for Prof. Williams' family in this difficult time. We are so thankful for the care and obvious love he showed his students.

Lynne Richards - July 12, 2014 at 09:52 PM

DB

“ Donna Burrell lit a candle in memory of Dr. Eldred Leslie Williams Jr.



Donna Burrell - July 12, 2014 at 08:26 PM

MM

“ I am so thankful for Dr. Williams. He truly transformed my son's life and I am sure others have also reaped the benefits of having known him. He has touched many lives in a way that only a great teacher and mentor can do. You have left this earth way too soon, Williams sensei. I offer my sincere condolences to the family members who sacrificed his presence many times for the benefit of his students. Only time can heal your tragic loss. My thoughts and prayers are sent your way.
Margaret Mullen, mother of Sam Mullen

Margaret Mullen - July 12, 2014 at 07:46 PM

MR

Deepest sympathy to the family of Professor Williams. I am keeping his family in my thoughts and prayers,

Mark Weiser Russell - July 13, 2014 at 11:48 AM

DS

My thoughts and prayers go to the William's Family. I can not begin to explain to you how much he impacted my life as a professor and friend. We had so much in common since I am 49 years old with daughters and a son. He will be missed dearly and he left behind a great legacy! God blessings to you and your family!

Dexter and Anita Stowers

Dexter Stowers - July 13, 2014 at 02:36 PM

JZ

With deepest sympathy and many thoughts for you and your family. We are so very sorry for your loss. ---The Zangas Family

Joan and George Zangas - July 13, 2014 at 05:29 PM