



Walter Thomas Graham

June 17, 1955 - February 24, 2025

Walter Thomas Graham, beloved father, grandfather, brother, and dedicated public servant, passed away on Monday, February 24, 2025, in Tallahassee, Florida. He was 69 years old.

Born on June 17, 1955, in Orlando, Florida, Walter was the second child and first son of Thomas William Graham and Martha Jones Graham. His early years were spent in Orlando, where his father worked for T.G. Lee Dairy Farm. The family later moved to Webster, Florida, where his father managed T.G. Lee's beef cattle operations. It was on the ranch that Walter and his siblings developed a strong work ethic and a deep appreciation for agriculture.

Walter was active in Future Farmers of America (FFA), eventually serving as Florida FFA Vice President. He graduated from South Sumter High School as Student Council President before attending Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College in Tifton, Georgia, where he was Student Body President and earned a degree in Agriculture. He later attended Valencia State College in Orlando, earning an Associate's degree, before enrolling at the University of Florida. There, he was actively involved in student leadership, serving as Student Senate President, a member of Florida Blue Key, and a proud brother of Alpha Gamma Rho fraternity. He graduated from UF with degrees in Journalism and Agricultural Economics.

During his time at the University of Florida, Walter met his future wife, Lisa Brown. They married after college and settled in Clay County, where they raised their two sons, Brian Houston Graham and Austin Noble Graham.

Walter's professional career began in the insurance industry with Florida Farm Bureau. He then became an independent agent, owning and operating multiple insurance agencies throughout Florida. His passion for politics led him to serve as Chairman of the Clay County Republican Party, where he played a key role in shaping the county's political landscape. His grassroots efforts helped elect the first Republican officials in Clay County's history. Walter later served as a Director for the Republican Party of Florida under Chairmen Tom Slade and Al Cardenas, expanding his impact on state politics.

His political acumen and leadership skills led to a lifelong friendship with Insurance Commissioner Tom Gallagher. Walter worked closely with Gallagher's campaigns and was later appointed Director of External Affairs for the Florida Department of Education. He went on to serve as Director of the Division of Unclaimed Property under four Chief Financial Officers, a role he held for more than two decades. Under his leadership, the program returned over \$5.1 billion to Floridians—accounting for 93% of all funds returned in the program's 64-year history. He was recognized nationally as President of the National Association of Unclaimed Property Administrators (NAUPA) and received the prestigious National Unclaimed Property Lifetime Achievement Award. He was also named the top unclaimed property administrator in the nation by the Unclaimed Property Professionals Organization (UPPO). Walter Graham's tireless efforts on behalf of Floridians, working with major banks, insurance corporations, the funeral industry, and even eliminating gift card expiration dates, earned him recognition as one of Florida's greatest consumer advocates.

Beyond his career, Walter was committed to public service, serving on the

boards of the Florida High School Athletic Association, the Florida Criminal Justice Standards and Training Commission, and the Florida Violent Crime Council.

Walter's greatest joys in life were his family and friends. He is survived by his sons, Brian Houston Graham of Orange Park, FL, and Austin Noble Graham (Nickey) of Middleburg, FL; his beloved grandchildren, Preston and Paisley of Middleburg, FL; and his younger brother, John Graham (Jamie) of Webster, FL. He was preceded in death by his parents, Thomas and Martha Graham; and his sisters Ellen Graham Collop and Lynn Graham Cox.

A celebration of Walter's life will be held at Purcell Funeral Home in Bushnell, Florida, on Saturday, March 15, 2025. Visitation will begin at 1:00 p.m., followed by a service at 2:00 p.m. He will be laid to rest at Garden of Memories in Webster, Florida. In lieu of flowers, the family kindly requests tax-deductible donations to the Walter T. Graham Scholarship for Emerging Leaders. Checks can be made payable to "AGR Educational Foundation" with memo "Walter T. Graham Scholarship" and mailed to Brian Graham, PO Box 9630, Fleming Island, FL 32006.

Walter Graham leaves behind a legacy of service, leadership, and dedication to his family, his community, and the state of Florida. He will be deeply missed.

Tribute Wall

CS

“ *Walter Graham was an honorable man and a great boss. I'll always have fond memories of riding motorcycles and wandering down Bourbon Street with him. Walter was passionate about protecting and returning Unclaimed assets to their rightful owners. Found this photo of Walter, Rick Sweet and myself helping to gut a home in St. Bernard Parrish in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina (December 2006).* ”



Calvin Sloan - March 18, 2025 at 10:00 PM



“ *Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Walter Thomas Graham.* ”



March 14, 2025 at 09:58 AM



“ *A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Walter Thomas Graham.* ”

March 14, 2025 at 09:58 AM

BG

“ *I am so very blessed to have been born the son of Walter Graham.*

He was wise, he was honest, he was devoted to his family, he was loyal to his friends, he was dedicated to his work and causes, he was a tireless advocate for good, and he was selfless.

Walter Graham was gracious and kind. He was and always will be my hero.



Brian Houston Graham - March 12, 2025 at 05:16 PM



“ *Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Walter Thomas Graham.*



March 11, 2025 at 12:48 PM



“ *Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Walter Thomas Graham.*



March 11, 2025 at 09:39 AM

DW

“ Walter you were a fantastic cousin and father. When I heard of your passin I cried had two seizures and was just that upset. You will always be in my heart and remember all the good things you did. Almost 2 years ago you gave my daddy his ulegy and now it's time for yours. I'm gonna miss you my wonderful cousin. L love you

Dawn Watson - March 10, 2025 at 03:42 PM

BT

“ Bob and Karen Turnage planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Walter Thomas Graham.

Bob and Karen Turnage - March 10, 2025 at 01:49 PM

BT

“ Bob and Karen Turnage purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of Walter Thomas Graham.



Bob and Karen Turnage - March 10, 2025 at 01:49 PM