



William Dempsey

January 30, 1936 - September 11, 2025

William Richard Dempsey, Ph.D., a distinguished military intelligence officer, dedicated professor, and accomplished author, passed away peacefully on September 11, 2025, at the age of 89. Born in Miami, Florida, on January 30, 1936, to Fred and Mary Dempsey, Richard grew up at the Suwannee River valley near his family's ancestral home. After graduating from Dixie County High School in 1955, he studied science education at Florida State University and the University of Florida.

Richard entered military service in 1960, where the U.S. Army trained him as a Russian linguist and intelligence specialist. His distinguished career took him from Ft. Bragg to Seoul, Korea, where he served as a branch chief in the Counterintelligence Division of G2, Eighth Army. He was later assigned to the 902nd Intelligence Corps Group and the Defense Intelligence Agency at the Pentagon. In 1965 he traveled with a team of agents through South and Central America assessing risks to defense attaches. In Quito, Ecuador, on Valentine's Day 1965, he met Ellen Ann Webb from the Eastern Shore of Virginia, who was a State Department secretary on temporary duty at the American Embassy. They chatted over Sunday breakfast at the hotel, then toured the city and later dined together. They married the following September in Arlington, Virginia.

The next year Richard resigned from the Army and enrolled at The George

Washington University, earning a doctorate in history in 1972. He taught five years as Assistant Professor at Fayetteville State University in North Carolina, where students voted him "Professor of the Year" in 1973. Colleagues elected him to the University Faculty Senate, which he later served for two years as Senate delegate to the All-UNC Faculty Assembly at Chapel Hill.

Moving to Atlanta in 1977, he returned to the intelligence field as a training director and eventually Chief of Training Division in the Intelligence Directorate of Forces Command. He retired January 1992 in the position of Civilian Advisor to the Director of Intelligence, J2, Forces Command, with a Meritorious Service Commendation.

He and Ellen moved to Tallahassee in August 1996 and joined the Unitarian Universalist Church, where Richard was guest speaker numerous times and served a term as Board President. Meantime, he worked toward his lifelong ambition to write fiction, drawing inspiration from Ernest Hemingway. He produced three novels using his life and ancestral history as basis for the stories. One of them took Second Prize for Literary Fiction from the Florida Writers Association, and he later published them in a single volume trilogy titled Fletcher's Lure (2004). A book of poems and essays, Dusted Horsemen (2005), another novel, The Woman Who Would Not Die (2007), a collection of short stories, The Street Preacher (2009), and a collection of essays and speeches, Remembering Socrates (2009), were self-published in limited editions.

Richard and Ellen travelled the world during their retirement. Paris was by far their favorite. They attended their son's wedding in Slovakia and saw their grandchildren in Prague. They enjoyed cruises around the world and took in the wonders of Egypt and the Middle East. They lived a full purposeful retirement together filled with love, adventure, and mutual support.

In 2014 the call of his roots took Richard back to Cross City, Florida where he and Ellen would spend their final days reuniting with close family and Rock Sink Baptist Church. After 56 years of marriage Ellen died in 2021. Richard

followed her peacefully on 11 September 2025, leaving a legacy of wisdom, creativity, and devotion to family.

Richard is survived by his son Erik Webb Dempsey, daughter-in-law Anna Dempsey, and grandchildren Daniel Webb Dempsey and Fiona Maria Dempsey. Also surviving are his sisters Mary Jo Cravey and Frances Sanders and his beloved niece and caregiver Kristna Cravey; all of Dixie County who were with him till the very end.

A memorial service will be held at Rock Sink Baptist Church on October 4, 2025 at 11am. In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made to the Rock Sink Building Fund.

Arrangements are under the care of Rick Gooding Funeral Home Cross City Chapel, with locations in Cross City (352-498-5400) and Chiefland (352-493-0050). Please sign the online guest book at rickgoodingfuneralhomes.com