

Biography of Citizen of the Year, 2006, Spurgeon Terry



Sir Knight Spurgeon Terry

Spurgeon D. Terry was born March 24, 1928, in Frisco City, Alabama. In 1937 his family moved 9 miles north to Monroeville, where the family home was located one block away from that of Nelle Harper Lee, author of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and where Truman Capote came during the summer when visiting his aunts and cousin. (Spurgeon likes to tell people that he is from “L.A.” – Lower Alabama.) Raised in the Baptist faith, Spurgeon was named after noted British evangelist, Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892). Spurgeon’s grandfather had been a lay

Baptist minister and was familiar with “The Great Spurgeon’s” sermons.

Spurgeon graduated from Monroe County High School in 1946. Being subject to the draft, he joined the U. S. Navy and served honorably for two years at the Potomac River Naval Command (including Solomons, Maryland, in Calvert County, located immediately across the Patuxent River from where he now lives in St. Mary’s County). Spurgeon attended George Washington University while working at the Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, American Law Division, where he was employed from 1948 until 1957. He also completed specialized further education at the U. S. Department of Agriculture Graduate School.

Spurgeon transferred to the U. S. Department of Commerce, U. S. Weather Bureau Library, serving as Serials Librarian and later, as Cataloger. After five years, he accepted the position of Assistant Law Librarian at the U. S. Department of Agriculture, and was selected as the Law Librarian upon the retirement of the previous Law Librarian. Spurgeon retired from this federal government position in October 1983. After several months, Spurgeon began working as a substitute Law Librarian at several private law firms in Washington, DC. One of these job ventures led Spurgeon to accept an appointment from the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (METRO) to establish a law library for them. When this was accomplished, Spurgeon accepted a new full-time position to serve as their first law librarian within their Office of the General Counsel.

Spurgeon Terry and Jean Elizabeth Tippet (whose father’s family had lived for a few hundred years in St. Mary’s County) were married on June 19, 1948, in St. Peter’s Catholic Church (on Capitol Hill) in Washington, D. C, where both her mother and grandmother had been married earlier. They raised 10 children and have 16 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

About his conversion to Catholicism, Spurgeon says, “Baptists make the best Catholics!” After

becoming engaged to his wife-to-be, Spurgeon began “convert” classes at St. Peter’s Church Rectory in order to become familiar with the religion of his spouse-to-be (since he had only known three persons in Alabama who were Catholic.) These “convert classes” would be comparable to today’s RCIA. By the time the sessions ended, after many weeks of prayer and study, Spurgeon had decided that this was the religion that he wanted as his own, and he was baptized at St. Peter’s Church and received his First Communion on Easter morning, 1948.

None of Spurgeon’s family in Alabama accepted his conversion to the Catholic faith. Only one friend in Alabama sent a wedding present. (This friend was later elected Probate Judge and became the political leader for Monroe County. Spurgeon’s nephew was elected to this same position last November.)

Throughout Spurgeon’s teen years in Alabama, he was a member of the Boy Scouts of America, wherein he became an Eagle Scout in 1945. He later served within the Washington National Capital Area Council as a Cub Master, as a Neighborhood Commissioner, and as an involved parent when his children became old enough to join the Scouts.

Since shortly after moving to St. Mary’s County in 1990, Spurgeon has been serving as the Service Officer of the 1,000-member St. Mary’s County Chapter 969 of the National Active and Retired Federal Employees (NARFE), leading more than 30 local NARFE volunteers in a program to assist others who contact NARFE for needed assistance in such matters as death of a spouse, retirement benefits, government life insurance, and any other matters for which assistance is needed. While participating with other NARFE members, Spurgeon has been involved with collecting several thousand dollars that were donated both for Alzheimer’s research and for HOSPICE. Spurgeon was previously a member of NARFE in Prince Georges County where he served as President of Chapter 264 (covering all of Prince Georges County and with over 1,000 members) for two years, 1986-88.

Spurgeon served during the 1960's and 1970's on the Hyattsville Citizens Advisory Committee and the Hyattsville Citizens Association (including service in various offices, including as President), and later served on the Hyattsville Ethics Committee. In 1985, the Mayor and Council of Hyattsville appointed Spurgeon Chairman of the Hyattsville Centennial Committee. A full program of activities was planned and carried out each month of the 1986 Centennial, ending on a special Saturday of many activities, attracting many hundreds of participants. During the celebration period, a City flag was created, a time capsule was buried, and a centennial history book of Hyattsville was published and distributed.

Spurgeon has always been politically active. He was elected to the City Council of Hyattsville, Maryland, in 1973 and served eight years, until 1981, including 1977-79 as Vice President and 1979-81 as President of the Council. (One of the members of the Council during this period later served as the Prince Georges County Executive and still later as Governor of the State of Maryland. Two others served as Delegates and one is still serving in this capacity.) Spurgeon also served tenure as Chairman of the Recreation Committee and the Public Works Committee. While serving as Chairman of the Historic Preservation Committee, Spurgeon was recognized as having led the creation of an historic district and other historic points within Hyattsville. An annual home tour of historic homes within Hyattsville has now been carried out for many years.

Several years ago, Spurgeon organized within our parish a Catholic Bible study group, presenting the Paulist Fathers "Share the Word" Catholic Bible Study, and including a video that coordinated with the weekly program booklets. Initially there were two separate groups, meeting on various days at St. John's. At one time, a weekly program was presented in the Rectory, moving later to one of the rooms within the school that had a television fitted with a video outlet. The participants usually consisted of between 10 and 12 parishioners, and sometimes included the Associate Pastor. This program was carried out within the parish for a

period of eight years, and during five of those years, the program was also presented twice a month to the prisoners at the Pre-Release Center in Hughesville.

Spurgeon first joined the Knights of Columbus in October 1960. During the years when he served on the Hyattsville city council, he was unable to participate in KofC activities, so he allowed his membership lapse. He reentered the Knights in 1983. Spurgeon joined St. John Francis Regis Council in 1990, after moving to Hollywood. He served as Grand Knight 1998-1999, and is currently a Trustee as well as our Pro-Life Chairman, Retention Chairman and Admissions Committee member. An active recruiter, Spurgeon has brought over 25 new members into our order. A Fourth Degree Knight, Spurgeon is a member of Father Andrew White Assembly #377.

He has participated in the local Tootsie Roll campaign, collecting donations for the Center for Life Enhancement to help the mentally handicapped. Spurgeon has also participated in and has successfully led the Council's car raffle campaign for KofC education assistance. This year, he headed up our "Keep Christ in Christmas" poster contest, expanding it to recognize entries worthy of Honorable Mention in each school grade.

He was twice presented with the Golden Knight award for Council #7914, for the years 1997-98 and 1999. The District VIII District Deputy Sir Knight (now Deacon) James M. Dominic, PGK, presented the Citizen of the Year Award, 1998-99, to Spurgeon Terry, "In Recognition of Extraordinary Service To The Community And Compassion For Human Welfare."

Brother Spurgeon continues to be one of our most faithful and active Knights. In addition to serving as Trustee, he is currently our Retention Chairman as well as the driving force behind all of our support for Pro-Life efforts.

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