



Dr. Dawit Teclemariam

January 12, 1946 - May 16, 2024

With heavy hearts, the family of Dr. Dawit Teclemariam announces his passing on Thursday, May 16, 2024.

Dawit was preceded in death by his parents, Teclemariam Weldu Negassi and Tsigay Neguse Tucabo; his aunt Enayte Leteyesus Weldu Negassi; his sister Abeba Teclemariam; his first child, Samrawit Dawit; his sister-in-law whom he raised like a daughter, Aden Okubai; and his brother, Ghaym Gliyazgi. He is survived by his wife of 51 years, Mikela Okubai; his children Eritrea Dawit (Eckert Steeple), Lula Dawit (Andrew Steinberg), and Yobial Dawit; his grandchildren, Ethan and Emilia Steeple; his nephew, whom he raised like a son, Amanuel Kalata (Nadia Kalata); niece Kidan Yemane; nephew Habtemariam Yemane (Yirgalem Mehtretab); brothers and sisters, Medhaniye, Paulos, Foto, Aregai, Timnit, and Tsega Gliyazgi; and numerous other relatives and cherished friends.

Born on January 12, 1946, in Wesdembra, Eritrea, Dawit and his older sister Abeba were raised in this rural area, where their family were farmers. Following the untimely death of their father, they were lovingly cared for by their aunt Enayte, a blessed nun in the Catholic Church. Despite early hardships, Dawit's intelligence and determination shone through. He completed his early education in Wesdembra and Keren, and high school in Asmara. In 1972, he earned a Bachelor of Science in Chemistry, Mathematics,

and Physics from Addis Ababa University, then called Haile Selassie I University. Thereafter, he taught chemistry and math to high school students throughout Ethiopia and served as a chemistry lecturer at the university.

Dawit and Mikela Okubai married on April 30, 1973, after his college graduation. They welcomed their first daughters, Samrawit and Eritrea. Due to political unrest in Eritrea and Ethiopia, the family immigrated to Gainesville, Florida, where Dawit earned a Master's in 1978 and a Ph.D. in Chemistry in 1984 from the University of Florida. After earning his doctorate, his academic journey continued with a postdoctoral fellowship and significant coursework in the College of Engineering, including Chemical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Environmental Engineering, and Materials Science. Dawit and Mikela's youngest children, Lula and Yobial, were born in Gainesville, a town they cherished. They embraced its community spirit and chose to raise their family here.

Dawit worked as a Senior Chemist for the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) until his retirement, earning widespread recognition for his innovation, passion, and dedication. He transformed the FDOT chemistry lab into one of the top-rated facilities in the nation, equipping it with state-of-the-art chemical and materials testing instruments. His leadership was instrumental in achieving EPA certification for environmental waters and ensuring compliance with EPA, AASHTO, and other regulating agencies. Dawit was celebrated for establishing the first Bituminous Lab testing hardware pyrolysis cleaning system, which enabled the use of non-toxic solvents for cleaning hardware and glassware. His colleagues admired his relentless pursuit of knowledge, kindness, generosity, his love for engaging in robust discussions, and his commitment to continuing education.

Dawit maintained a lifelong passion for learning, staying engaged with his mentors at the University of Florida, including Professors Robert J. Hanrahan

and Marvin L. Muga, who remained lifelong friends and advisors. He was an active member of the American Chemical Society, the American Physical Society, and the Society of Applied Spectroscopy, where he enjoyed reading and writing professional reports, engaging in stimulating discussions and attending conferences.

Outside of his professional life, Dawit was a devout Catholic, admired for his kind heart, peaceful demeanor, and sense of humor. His generosity knew no bounds; he sponsored numerous family members, classmates, and friends in their efforts to immigrate to the United States. A voracious reader, he always had a book, newspaper, or magazine within reach. Dawit loved hosting family and friends at his home in Gainesville and enjoyed immersing himself in different cultures. He developed friendships with people from all over the world.

A dedicated runner and exercise enthusiast, one of his favorite activities was running the stadium steps at Ben Hill Griffin Stadium, affectionately known as "the Swamp." He often challenged his children to complete "Gator Mountain" with him and was an enthusiastic supporter of the Florida Gators football and basketball teams. He cherished spending time with his family and friends, going on road trips to Jacksonville and Orlando to visit loved ones, taking his kids and their friends to Crescent Beach, and uniting people with his warmth, good humor, and boundless hospitality.

One of his proudest roles was that of a grandfather. Dawit joyfully helped raise his grandson Ethan, born in 2010, and his granddaughter Emilia, born in 2016, in Atlanta, Georgia. He spent his final years surrounded by family every day, his pride and joy.

Dawit's death leaves a profound void in the lives of those who loved him. His

spirit will live on in his family and friends, who will hold him close to their hearts forever.

In lieu of flowers, the family welcomes donations to
Kidhanemehret Eritrean Catholic Church: 1355 Rockbridge Rd, Stone
Mountain, GA, 30087 (Attn: Father Kidane Hagu)
Eritrean-American Community of Georgia: atleritrea.org or 720 Hambrick Rd
#3316, Stone Mountain, GA, 30083.

Previous Events

Funeral Mass

MAY **23.** 10:00 AM - 12:30 PM (PT)

Kidanemehret Eritrean Ge'ez Rite Catholic Church
1355 Rockbridge Road
Stone Mountain, GA 30087

Burial

MAY **24.** 1:00 PM - 1:30 PM (ET)

Melwood Cemetery
5170 E Ponce de Leon Ave
Stone Mountain, GA 30083

Tribute Wall



“ *Renee L. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Dr. Dawit Teclemariam.*

Renee L. - May 23, 2024 at 02:43 PM