

Memorial Minute for William Beale
(April 17, 1928 – July 24, 2016)

[Largely from an obituary published in *The Athens Messenger*]

William Taylor Beale, 88, died on July 24, 2016, attended by his immediate surviving family – wife, Carol, and children, Faith, Dan, and John – and loving friends. A lifelong inventor and philosopher, he had a driving ambition to leave the world a better place, based on sound engineering and innovative thought. Although he claimed never to have achieved the full extent of his intentions, his inventions were essential components of products on Earth and in space; his company and its spinouts employed hundreds, and his philanthropic funding enabled local, regional, and global extension and continuation of his visions.

He was born to Katherine and David Beale on April 17, 1928, in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Self-described as a youth who was a “loner, a dreamer, and an inventor of usually warlike things,” William segued from homemade well-diving equipment and road-asphalt bombs to early employment as a Naval radar technician during the final year of World War II. There he discovered “the bloody waste of war games,” an assessment that carried through his career. After earning an M.S. from Caltech that included the study of intercontinental ballistic missiles, he “resolved, deep in his muddled soul, never to use this knowledge for its original intended purpose.” He adhered absolutely to these principles, including strong activism and support of disengagement in military conflict during the Vietnam War, and later in rejection of a potential weapons development contract that would have helped his struggling small business, but ran against his deepest convictions on the essential role of rational and peaceful engagement between nations.

While getting an M.S. from MIT in Boston in 1958, William met and married Harvard graduate Carol Brand Beale, with whom he moved to Athens, Ohio, in 1961 as a faculty member in Ohio University's engineering department. The couple purchased an old farmhouse on 300 acres of rolling, rural Appalachian woodland. William aided Carol's tireless maintenance and development of gardens and livestock while himself maintaining the underlying technology, including the 200-year-old barn and other outbuildings, and continually remodeling and improving the 100-year-old farmhouse. The couple dedicated themselves

to a carbon-free existence, and for the final decade of his life William continued to maintain and improve their woodstove-fired hot-water-circulation system as well as their all-solar electrical system (which also powered their electric Leaf vehicle).

William delighted in the education and encouragement of the next generation. Many of his mentees cite his marked influence on their own sense of innate curiosity about the mathematical, physical, and mechanical principles in the world around them.

William was a voracious reader and participant in vigorous ongoing conversations with friends, family, associates, and passersby. His favorite book, re-read during his last days, was E. O. Wilson's *Half Earth: Our Planet's Fight for Life*, which incorporates many of William's most passionate beliefs about the duties incumbent upon humans, as the greatest Earthly change factor, to preserve and protect the globe under their dominion. His most recent essays are accessible at <http://www.visioningthefuture.org>.

William is survived by his wife and three children and their spouses and partners; six grandchildren; two siblings, Inez Harrell and David Beale; and a broad local, regional, and global network of family, friends, and followers.

William was an early member and literal builder of Athens Unitarian Fellowship. His wife, Carol, began attending Athens Friends Meeting regularly about ten years ago, and William attended with her on many occasions, ministering, supporting, and participating in the Meeting in numerous ways. A public memorial service was hosted by the Athens Friends Meeting in September 2016.