

Dr. Mark C. Thelin 6H-R

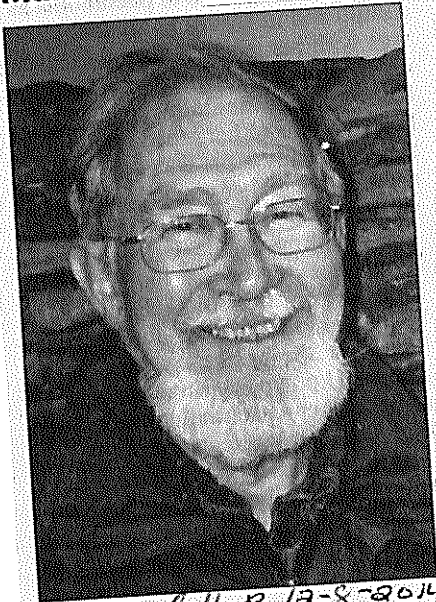
Dr. Mark C. Thelin, 81, of the Mayflower Community in Grinnell, died on Monday, Dec. 1, 2014, at Grinnell Regional Medical Center.

A memorial service will be held at 2 p.m., Monday, Dec. 8, in the Carman Center of the Mayflower Community.

Memorials may be directed to the Mark Thelin Memorial Fund.

The Smith Funeral Home of Grinnell is handling arrangements. 12-4-14

Mark Thelin



6H-R 12-8-2014
Mark Thelin, 81, of Grinnell, died Monday, Dec. 1, 2014, at Grinnell Regional Medical Center.

A memorial service was held Monday, Dec. 8, in the Carman Center of the Mayflower Community with the Rev. Christine Tinker, chaplain of the Mayflower Community, officiating. Pianist was William Tinker.

Should friends desire, memorials may be directed to the Mark Thelin Memorial Fund and sent in care of the Smith Funeral Home, P.O. Box 368, Grinnell, Iowa 50112.

Mark was born Aug. 29, 1933, in Fuzhou, China, to Guy and Elizabeth Cushman Thelin. His father was vice principal of an agricultural high school. Due to the political turmoil China experienced in the 1930s and 40s, Mark was evacuated three times by the time he was 16; he spent part of his early years in suburban Providence, R.I., and later graduated from high school in Sioux Falls, S.D.

Mark received his undergraduate degree from Oberlin College in Ohio, majoring in sociology. In 1955, he went to Taiwan with Oberlin's Shansi Program and taught English at Tunghai University during the first two years of that university's existence. He then returned to the U.S. to pursue an MA at Oberlin College followed by Ph.D. at the University of North Carolina, both in sociology. He returned to Tunghai in 1962 to teach in the university's then newly established sociology department, the first such program in Taiwan. He helped establish a work camp program at Tunghai, allowing students to volunteer on community development projects in rural villages. He continued to serve as faculty advisor to this program for the next 20 years. He also joined the board of directors of the Taiwan Fund for Children and Families, and remained on that board for more than 30 years.

On April 3, 1966, while on sabbatical in New York City, he married Virginia Hermann and a few months later they returned together to Taiwan and Tunghai, where Mark became chairman of the sociology department, a position he held for 11 years. In the late 1960s, Mark and Virginia had two sons, Carl and Eric.

In the 1970s, Mark authored the book, "Two Taiwanese Villages," about community development efforts in Taiwan, and established a social work program within Tunghai's Sociology Department. This was the first social work program in Taiwan. Five years later it was spun off into its own department, and Mark's former students went on to found other social work departments in Taiwan, as well as the first several social work departments to be established in mainland China.

The family lived briefly in Grinnell from 1988 to 1989 while Mark was a visiting professor at the sociology department of Grinnell College. In 1990, they moved to Tainan Theological College, where Mark established and served as chairman of the social work department. They remained there until Mark's retirement in 1999.

After retirement, Mark and Virginia moved to Durham, England, where they completed graduate degrees in archeology, and remained for nine years, volunteering on archeological digs and doing further research. Mark and Virginia have lived in the Harwich Terrace neighborhood of the Mayflower Community for the past six years.

Survivors include his wife, Virginia Thelin of Grinnell; and two sons, Carl Thelin of Shanghai, China, and Eric Thelin of South Lake Tahoe, Calif.

He was preceded in death by his parents and one brother, Robert Thelin.