



## Dr. Simon Daniel Perry

January 6, 1931 - January 27, 2023

Simon Daniel Perry, 92, beloved Marshall University political science professor who inspired generations of students, passed away peacefully at home on January 27, 2023 in the embrace of his loving wife of sixty-six years, Frances Hickman Perry.

Simon was born on January 16, 1931 in Baisden, West Virginia. He grew up in a farmhouse on Gilbert Creek in Mingo County with his beloved parents, Hallie Cline and Uley Perry, his brothers and sisters, and his Uncle Milt Thompson. As he once wrote to his parents, he loved his childhood: "Sitting on the front porch on Sunday afternoons listening to all of the adults talk about politics, religion, and the end of time...I have never found a kinder, more loving place or [a place] with greater goodness than that found on Gilbert Creek." His childhood would inform his politics, shape his priorities, and provide the background for many of his memorable classroom stories.

Simon graduated from Berea College in 1954, earning A.B. degrees in political science and history and a minor in philosophy. He was elected student body president and founded Berea College's first model United Nations. It was at Berea that he witnessed the painful realities of segregation. The town was a typical 1950s Southern town, and his Black classmates were excluded from many of the town's eating establishments. Simon organized boycotts of the businesses that would not serve Black students. In his

valedictory address at Berea, he implored the community to do better: “It is just for us to treat all peoples with respect, dignity, and understanding. It is unjust and plain conceit for one person to discriminate against another on the basis of race, color, or creed. It is time that you should recognize that segregation is bad, and it would be good of you, if you could become concerned enough, to lend a hand in putting it to its death bed.”

After college graduation, Simon returned to Gilbert Creek, anticipating that he would quickly be drafted through the Selective Training and Service Act. As the weeks dragged on with no conscription, his older sister, Garnet, shamed him for not working. He accepted an offer to teach at Williamson High School, where he met the love of his life, a young chemistry teacher named Frances Hickman. As much as he enjoyed teaching at Williamson, however, his career there was short-lived. Believing in Simon’s potential for an academic career, one of his Berea college professors connected him to an instructor’s position at the University of Tennessee to support his graduate studies, so Simon moved with his new wife Frances to Knoxville, where he earned a master’s degree in political science in 1955.

Simon and Frances then moved to East Lansing, Michigan, where he earned his Ph.D. in political science from Michigan State University, completing his coursework in 1961. He joined the faculty at the University of Michigan, where he finished his doctoral dissertation, which won the Leonard D. White Award, presented annually by the American Political Science Association to honor the nation’s best dissertation in the field of public administration.

In 1962, Simon joined the Political Science Department at Marshall University as an associate professor. He retired from active duty teaching 48 years later as professor emeritus, making his tenure as a faculty member the longest in the university’s history.

Simon taught tens of thousands of students in his long career. He inspired many careers in public service, including teaching and academia, but also in other fields, such as law, journalism, and social work. He developed many courses while at Marshall, including student favorites “Public Opinion and Propaganda” and “Politics in History,” as well as a concentration in constitutional democracy comprising courses that he created, focusing on transformative leaders, moments, and eras in United States political history. According to Marshall Professor of Social Work and civil rights activist Dr. Philip W. Carter, Jr., in the early 1960s, Simon created the first civil rights course of study at a predominantly white university in the South. Simon encouraged his students and others to engage in activism to achieve their goals and created a learning environment where students could explore divergent views through civil discourse and thoughtful interaction.

Simon contributed to the university in many ways in addition to teaching, including serving as Chair of the Political Science Department for many years. He was proud to have drafted the university’s faculty constitution, and was recognized in various ways for his excellence in teaching.

His numerous honors include being awarded the Marshall University Distinguished Service Award in 1990, being named the first Distinguished Drinko Fellow by the John Deaver Drinko Academy for Political Institutions and Civic Culture in 1994-95. He won the College of Liberal Arts Outstanding Teaching Award in 2001, 2004, and 2010. In 2007, he was voted one of Marshall’s top five “Living Legends” by alumni, colleagues, and then-current students. He was twice recognized with the prestigious Distinguished West Virginian award, presented to him by Governor Arch Moore in 1988 and Governor Joe Manchin in 2007.

His influence extended beyond the university. During the administration of

U.S. President Jimmy Carter, Simon was invited to the White House to participate in a conference on the Strategic Arms Limitation treaty (SALT II).

Upon his retirement, recognizing his profound influence on generations of Marshall students and on his community, Marshall University decided to establish a constitution center in his name, with a mission of ensuring that his legacy would be preserved. The Simon Perry Center for Constitutional Democracy was launched in 2011. The center comprises an interdisciplinary academic program that includes courses in political science, history, philosophy, English, and sociology; a centralized university-wide pre-law program, and a significant public education outreach initiative through its Amicus Curiae Lecture Series on Constitutional Democracy, which brings noted scholars from throughout the country to campus to lecture on issues related to law, politics, and governance. The lecture series is supported by the West Virginia Humanities Council and the lectures, which are free and open to the public, are recorded and later aired as a program on West Virginia public television. The center is directed by Simon's former student and dear friend, Patricia Proctor, who transitioned from a 20-year career as a practicing attorney to become its founding director.

Simon was always a voracious reader, engaging not only in the academic reading of the American Political Science Review and the Journal of Politics, but also devouring books focused on history, philosophy, politics, and literature. His personal library included thousands of well-read volumes. Simon also wrote books himself, including *Morality, Self Interest, and the Cities* (1997) and *Thomas Jefferson and Andrew Jackson: By Their Deeds You Shall Know Them* (2013).

Simon was an avid fan of the St. Louis Cardinals baseball team, inspired by Hall of Famer Stan Musial's career. He watched Musial play for the Williamson, West Virginia RedBirds minor league team from 1939-40 before

going on to star for the Cardinals. Simon was a loyal follower of the team for the rest of his life.

Simon was very close to his family and cherished his wife, his three sons, David, Paul, and Thomas, and his daughter, Kelly. He had a special connection to his daughters-in-law, Diane and Jennifer, and his son-in-law, David Vaziri. He doted on his ten granddaughters and two great-granddaughters. Simon and Frances adored their “adopted daughter” Razia Bennoui, an Afghan immigrant who lost her family to the Taliban. They became mother and father to her and grandparents to her four children, Eddie, Elias, Nadia, and Riyad.

Many years ago, Simon was deeply moved by 19th century lawyer, writer, and orator Robert Ingersoll’s obituary for his brother, Ebon. The words in this eulogy could have been written for Simon:

"This brave and tender man in every storm of life was oak and rock; but in the sunshine he was vine and flower. He was the friend of all heroic souls. He climbed the heights and left all superstitions far below, while on his forehead fell the golden dawning of the grander day.

He loved the beautiful and was with color, form, and music touched to tears. He sided with the weak, the poor, and wronged, and lovingly gave alms. With loyal heart and with the purest hands he faithfully discharged all public trusts.

He was a worshiper of liberty, a friend of the oppressed. A thousand times I have heard him quote these words: "For Justice all place a temple, and all season, summer!" He believed that happiness was the only good reason, the only torch, justice the only worship, humanity the only religion, and love the only priest. He added to the sum of human joy; and were every one to whom he did some loving service to bring a blossom to his grave, he would sleep to-

night beneath a wilderness of flowers."

Simon was preceded in death by his parents; his son Paul Perry, his beloved Uncle Milt Thompson, and his cherished siblings Betty Perry; Thurman Perry; Mervil Perry; Garnet Perry Van Horn and Garnet's husband Cliff Van Horn; and Kathy Perry Punturi and her husband Al Punturi.

Simon is survived by his wife, Frances, sons David Perry and Thomas Perry, and daughter Kelly Perry Vaziri, as well as by his son-in-law David Vaziri and his daughters-in-law Jennifer Jones Perry (Thomas's wife) and Diane Wilson Perry. He is also survived by adoring granddaughters Kelli Dixon and her husband, Shawn Dixon; Elizabeth Vaziri and her husband, Jake Van Koevering; Charlotte Vaziri, Madeleine Vaziri, and Carolyn Vaziri; Katherine Perry, Anna Perry, Leisl Perry, Elizabeth Perry, and Genevieve Perry, as well as his great-granddaughters, Chloe and Lilly Dixon.

He is also survived by his siblings, Huey Perry and Huey's wife Jill; Winston Perry and Winston's wife Joyce; Drema Perry Ferrell and Drema's husband, Carl Ferrell, and by his sister-in-law Dreama Perry, who was married to his brother Mervil. Simon leaves behind many nieces and nephews he adored, as well as countless cousins, colleagues, and friends.

The family will have a small, private funeral and interment on Saturday, February 4, 2023. Arrangements are being made with Henson and Kitchen Mortuary and Cremation Services, 6357 E. Pea Ridge Rd. Huntington, WV near Barboursville. A public memorial service honoring his amazing life and career will be hosted at Marshall University on a date to be announced soon.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations in his memory to the Simon Perry Center for Constitutional Democracy, <https://www.marshall.edu/spc>.

Donations may be mailed to the Marshall University Foundation, 519 John Marshall Drive, Huntington, WV 25755, and designated for the Simon Perry Center. Online condolences and memories may be shared with the family by visiting [www.hensonandkitchen.com](http://www.hensonandkitchen.com) .

## Cemetery Details

### Springhill Cemetery

Huntington, WV

## Previous Events

### Private Funeral Services

FEB 4 (ET)

Christ Temple Church  
2400 Johnstown Road  
Huntington, WV 25701  
<http://www.ctcww.net>

# Tribute Wall



“ *Henson & Kitchen Mortuary created a Tribute Video in memory of Dr. Simon Daniel Perry*



**Henson and Kitchen Mortuary and Cremation Services** - February 02, 2023 at 04:31 PM

JO

*What a beautiful tribute to an amazing man!*

**Jocy** - February 04, 2023 at 01:07 PM

AN

*How incredibly beautiful, just like the sort person he was.*

**Ana** - February 13, 2023 at 11:51 PM



“ *Dr. Simon Daniel Perry*

October 23, 2023 at 01:49 AM

HV

“ I'm sorry to hear about Dr. Perry. I have fond memories of him from Marshall University. He was a kind and wonderful man. My heartfelt condolences to the Perry family. You are in my thoughts and prayers.



Henry Vinson

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Henry Vinson - February 16, 2023 at 01:03 PM

DS

“ Blessed are we who learned at the feet of the master. My first class with him, he recognized me...I am a grandniece of Milt Thompson. Dr. Perry (or Dr. Simon by my mother) was going to take me to see him, but Uncle Milt passed before that could happen. When asked about his classes, I always told the truth ... he was tough. Take down everything he says. But...you will learn so much. I'd love to hear his lectures again and all his Ms. Frances stories. I know he is regaling St. Peter and all our family and friends in Heaven. Thank you, sir.

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Debra A. Sparks - February 08, 2023 at 03:50 PM

CW

“ Simon gave me direction when my career aspirations were drifting. My favorite professor for sure. Very kind and patient with this Hillbilly. The Perry brothers shaped my life in many positive ways. Mervil, Simon and Winston were mentors, and Huey once made me an awesome sandwich! My life is richer for knowing this family. My love and prayers to the family. Chuck Williamson

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Chuck Williamson - February 06, 2023 at 04:33 PM



“ *Arrive in Style was purchased for the family of Dr. Simon Daniel Perry.*



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February 06, 2023 at 12:18 PM



“ *The Punturi Family purchased the Love's Tapestry for the family of Dr. Simon Daniel Perry.*



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**The Punturi Family** - February 02, 2023 at 09:36 PM



“ *Arrive in Style was purchased for the family of Dr. Simon Daniel Perry.*



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February 02, 2023 at 08:49 PM



“ 119 files added to the album LifeTributes



**Henson and Kitchen Mortuary and Cremation Services** - February 02, 2023 at 04:23 PM



“ *I feel fortunate that as the 37th President of Marshall University I was able to get to know Dr. Simon Perry. Legendary faculty members like Dr. Perry are rare, and it is always an honor to be in their presence. His impact was so significant that his legacy will forever be a part of Marshall. I extend my sincere condolences to his wife and the Perry family. With sympathy, Jerome A. Gilbert*

**Jerome A Gilbert** - February 02, 2023 at 10:04 AM



“ *Sentiments of Serenity Spray was purchased for the family of Dr. Simon Daniel Perry.*



February 02, 2023 at 09:45 AM

BC

“ For 20 years and across state lines, my complete note taking from two of Dr. Perry’s classes have traveled. I hung on his every word. As US politics became unrecognizable, I often wondered what Dr. Perry thought about it all. Then, memories of his lectures offered reason and hope. Thank you, Dr. Perry.



Beth C. - February 01, 2023 at 09:40 PM

MW

“ Marsha webb lit a candle in memory of Simon Perry



Marsha webb - February 01, 2023 at 07:02 PM



“ Celestial Love was purchased for the family of Dr. Simon Daniel Perry.



February 01, 2023 at 05:47 PM

TR

“ I still have my notebooks from Simon Perry's classes at Marshall University in the 1970's. Great teacher.

Tim Rutledge - February 01, 2023 at 04:58 PM

TC

“ Dr Perry ..Thank you for loving your job so much ! You were an amazing professor and thank you for everything you taught me as well as your support...you were always above and beyond the expectations of a 'great' professor. RIP and blessings to your family .

truman Chafin - February 01, 2023 at 03:07 PM

BB

“ Frances and family, my deepest sympathy for your loss. You are hearing from a number of Simon's friends and students, like me, who enjoyed his friendship and his classes. We learned so much from him. I took several classes during the time he was not driving, so I was able to give him a ride home after late classes. I treasure those extra minutes with him. He was always interested in everything and everybody. We were fortunate in Huntington and Marshall to have him, and to memorialize him with the Simon Perry center that will live on. I also remember his love for baseball and Stan Musial. I met Stan the Man at a wedding in St. Louis, and brought Simon an autographed picture. You would have thought I gave him a priceless treasure. I have missed his presence and remember so much I learned during those active years.

Betty Barrett - February 01, 2023 at 09:36 AM



“ Loving Lilies and Roses Bouquet was purchased for the family of Dr. Simon Daniel Perry.



February 01, 2023 at 09:23 AM

DK

“Blessed are we who learned at the feet of the master. He recognized me my first class...as the grand niece of Uncle Milt. I almost got to meet him. I would love to hear his lectures again his stories of Frances. What a treasure we have lost.

Debra Sparks Kinsey - February 01, 2023 at 09:19 AM

EE

“Dr. Simon Perry changed my life, that’s not hyperbole. I took several of his courses while at Marshall University and his wit, kindness, and tremendous knowledge being such a well-read individual impacted me on such a personal level. I credit him with helping make me a voracious reader and writer with a love for the political, cultural, economic, historical and scientific. The world had lost a bright and shining light but I’m sure that light was passed down to his large and loving family and to the countless lives he touched. My deepest and sincerest condolences go to the Perry family.

Eric D. Engle - February 01, 2023 at 08:20 AM

TA

“As one of thousands of students you helped and inspired at Marshall, I want to say thank you and send my condolences to his family.

Troy Acree - January 31, 2023 at 09:01 PM



“Dr. Perry was a treasure to his students. A life well lived. Ancil Ramey

Ancil Ramey - January 31, 2023 at 07:10 PM

PP

“ Dr. Perry was an inspiration to me as a student. I majored in Political Science, mostly because of his influence. He was an awesome professor and eventually, my advisor, mentor and friend. I was his graduate assistant and obtained my Masters in Pol.Sci. in 1973. I will never forget his wisdom, intelligence and remarkable lectures. He was an amazing and brilliant man. Condolences to his wife and family. You are in my prayers. Pat Dean Pauley



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Pat Dean Pauley - January 31, 2023 at 05:14 PM

LD

“ Dear Perry Family,  
We are so sorry to hear of the passing of Dr. Perry. Please know that you will be in our prayers in the days to come.

Love,  
Laura Frampton Disney  
Martha Frampton Hagan  
Linda Frampton

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Laura F. Disney - January 30, 2023 at 11:08 AM