

Obituary for George N. Kirk

George Nathan Kirk of Corpus Christi, Texas passed away on Friday, January 13, 2023.

George was born in Moline, Illinois on April 27, 1921, to George E. and Erna Kirk where he was raised and went to school. He is a graduate of Moline High School and attended three years at the University of Iowa prior to joining the Navy at the start of WWII.

At the University of Iowa, he enrolled the ROTC – Civilian Pilot Training Program where he initiated his flight training. He enlisted in the Navy on January 3rd, 1942, and began his fighter pilot training. He was sent to St. Louis for basic training; then to Corpus Christi where he earned his naval wings at the Naval Air Station. From Corpus, he was sent to Norfolk, Virginia for aircraft carrier qualification. On June 1, 1943 he received orders to report to Air Group 8 where he flew some of the first Grumman F6F-3 (Hellcat) that came off of the assembly line. He, then deployed on US Navy ship the CV-11 *Intrepid* to Hawaii in December 1943 and later CV-17 *Bunker Hill* to the Pacific Theater in March 1944.

George's patriotic service during WWII was pronounced. He was a Naval Flying Ace with seven combat victories, awarded two Distinguished Flying Crosses and three Navy Air Medals. His combat activities included multiple island warfare - the Marianas *Turkey Shoot*, Iwo Jima, Formosa and support of McArthur's Philippine Invasion in Oct 1944. He then returned to Florida in early 1945 to develop night fighting tactics for the new Grumman F6F-5N aircraft. Ultimately honorably discharged from the Navy in

After WWII, George began an influential civilian career guiding aviation development in the Quad Cities for 28-years. In 1955, he was hired to be the first manager of the Quad City Airport. Civilian aviation was expanding, and the airfield grew into an airport in every sense, with a runway two miles long. He directed the creation of the Industrial Park, financed infrastructure, water facilities and new streets. Ultimately, he directed the construction of a state-of-the-art terminal building and stayed on the job until it was completed.

In his tenure he was recognized as a leader in the aviation field. He joined the American Association of Airport Executives [A.A.A.E]. In 1955. He helped form the Great Lakes Chapter for the association and became its first president. In 1976, he was elected by his peers to have the honor of serving as President of the national AAAE organization. As President, he directed the associations' board and the staff of AAAE to create and develop an accreditation program for airport managers in the aviation industry. It was to become a 'Masters' program for those in the airport management industry to build their knowledge, expertise, and professionalism in managing airports and air transportation. He was the first airport manager to complete the courses and earn the accreditation as an Accredited Airport Executive. [A.A.E.]”

George retired from the airport 1983 to pursue his passion for traveling, golf, hunting and fishing.

On August 8, 1943, in Virginia Beach, Virginia, prior to his departure to the combat zone, he married his best friend and high school sweet-heart Virginia (Ginny) Christofferson. He later said, "We were 22-years old. The Navy gave us their fastest fighter planes and I married Ginny.... it was the best summer of my life."

In 1951, George and Ginny became parents to twin boys. Randall (Randy) and Christopher (Chris). Both are 1969 graduates of Rock Island High School. After retirement George and Ginny enjoyed the Quad Cities with friends and family playing golf, fishing the Mississippi River, and traveling. They were active members of the Arsenal Country Club. They spent their winters on North Padre Island, Corpus Christi, Texas. In 1998, after 15 years of being “winter Texans” they decided to move to North Padre Island permanently. Again, enjoying friends, golf and the coastal waters of Texas. Ginny passed away in May of 2004 after a remarkable 61 years of marriage.

Over the years, George has received many honors with the most recent in November, 2022 when he was inducted into the Commemorative Air Force – Third Coast Squadron “Hall of Fame”. In 2000 he was inducted into the Moline High School - Hall of Fame. Other notable honors include the American Fighter Aces - 2014 Congressional Medal of Honor and being named to the Military Aviation Hall of Fame of Illinois.

Memberships include the Padre Island Presbyterian Church, Quiet-Birdman [QB], Rock Island Arsenal Country Club, Padre Island Country Club, and a proud member of the benevolent Friendly Fishing Club and the Moon Group.

George died in his home with his boys by his side. The Kirk family comments:

"In our eyes and the eyes of others he was an amazing gentleman.... a great husband and father, a good friend to many, and a true hero of the greatest generation. He was Blessed with longevity, lived life to the fullest and remained independent in his apartment overlooking the canals of the Laguna Madre up to his death. He is loved dearly and will be missed."

George is survived by his twin sons Randall (Randy) Kirk and wife Tess of Lago Vista, Texas and Christopher (Chris) Kirk and wife Sheryl of College Station, Texas. George has seven (7) grandchildren; twenty-one (21) great grandchildren; and two (2) great-great grandchildren.

Funeral arrangements are being made through Trimble Funeral Home in Moline, Illinois. A Funeral Service is scheduled at Trimble's for 10:00AM Monday, January 30th, 2023 with a procession and interment to follow at the National Cemetery on the Rock Island Arsenal.

A Memorial Service is scheduled for 2:00PM Saturday, February 25th, 2023 at the Island Presbyterian Church in Corpus Christi, Texas.

In lieu of flowers the family asks that you to consider a donation to one of the following:

The Kirk Family Memorial Scholarship Fund
c/o The Sheriffs' Association of Texas
1601 South Interstate Highway 35
Austin, Texas 78741

Island Presbyterian Church
14030 Fortuna Bay Drive
Corpus Christi, Texas 78418

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