

Raymond Nagle Fitzgerald



Colonel Raymond N. Fitzgerald, USAFR (Ret.), flew from this earth for the final time on 29 December 2020, at home in Niantic, CT, with his wife and soulmate, Rachel, by his side. Ray battled lung cancer for five years and lived a wonderful life full of adventures and creating memories until the last call. “Fitz” was member of the Naval Academy Class of 1960, 21st Company. After graduation, he became a naval aviator, assigned to VF-32, flying the F-8 Crusader, and made two deployments to the Mediterranean with the Sixth Fleet. Ray resigned from active service in 1965 to attend The University of Connecticut Law School, graduating in 1968.

Subsequently, he flew the A-4 in the Naval Reserve and the F-100 and A-10 in the Connecticut Air National Guard. The highlight of his flying career was a tour as the commander of the 118th Tactical Fighter Squadron. Ray retired as a colonel in 1986, having loved his time as a fighter pilot, dancing with supersonic angels among the clouds.

Ray practiced law as in-house attorney at Kaman Corporation, and then found his passion for business and aviation management. He reached the pinnacle of his career as President and CEO of Atlantic Aviation Corporation (AAC), retiring in 2000, while continuing to consult and serve on numerous boards of director. In 2007, Ray received the National Air Transportation Association’s highest award, The Ong Award for Extraordinary and Meritorious Service to the Aviation Industry.

Ray volunteered on Habitat for Humanity Global Village builds to seven countries, most memorably Madagascar, where he met Rachel. Ray loved to spend summers at their home on the shore in Connecticut, and the winter season skiing in Whistler, Canada. In the shoulder seasons, Ray and Rachel had a passion for travel, visiting over 50 countries and all seven continents together.

Ray was blessed with good health and an adventurous spirit. He loved athletics, participated in marathons, triathlons, racquet sports, heli-skied black diamonds, raced cars, sailed blue waters and hiked to gorgeous vistas. He also loved all things Irish, and riding Harleys across the country, to Sturgis, and around New Zealand.

Ray also leaves behind five children; his sister, Patricia Burns of Worcester, MA; and numerous grandchildren, nephews, nieces, and cousins. Ray wanted to be remembered by those he loved as someone who lived life to the fullest: as a husband, father, friend, squadron-mate, classmate, business colleague and sports participant.

March-April 2021 Shipmate