

Nicholas Brigham Temple

Nicholas Brigham Temple, USN Ret., passed away on February 7, 2026, at 1:00 AM peacefully in home on Fox Island.

Nick was born September 30th, 1937. He was born to a navy family, graduated from Landon High School, Bethesda Md. (1956) and received an appointment to the Academy through the Presidential selection process. He graduated with the class of 1960 and was preceded by the graduation of his father, RAdm. Harry B. Temple (class of 1924) and his great, great, grandfather, RAdm. William Grenville Temple (class of 1846), the first graduating class of the Academy.

While at USNA, Nick played varsity tennis and was team captain in 1960. After graduation, Nick began flight training at Pensacola, Fl. and finished advanced flight training at Kingsville, Tx. He stood high in his flight training class and subsequently was the first student Naval Aviator to be assigned to the then brand-new F-4 Phantom fighter aircraft.

He joined VF-74, the first operational F-4 squadron, aboard the USS Forrestal. He made two Mediterranean cruises and was involved in the ill-fated Bay of Pigs invasion as well as the Cuban Missile Crisis. Nick also had the privilege of flying in the “missing wing formation” at the funeral of President Kennedy. Nick was then assigned on exchange duty with the USAF to attend the Air Force Test Pilot School located at Edwards AFB; his CO was Gen. Chuck Yeager. From there, Nick was assigned to VX-4, Pt. Mugu, Ca. There, he managed AIM-7 (Sparrow Missile) project and the ACLS (automated carrier landing project). He was the first Naval Aviator to ever make a “hands off” night, aircraft carrier landing. In addition, he invented the PALS (pilot activated lock on system), which was installed in every F-4 aircraft fleet-wide. He also invented the drop light system found on the fantail of every CVA fleet-wide.

He was “deep selected” to the rank of Lcdr. Nick resigned his commission in 1967 but volunteered to pull one combat tour. He joined VF-161 aboard the USS Coral Sea in 1968 and proceeded to the Gulf of Tonkin. He left active duty in February 1969.

Nick’s civilian life saw numerous entrepreneurial adventures. He was, at times, a stockbroker, fish farmer, Sr. VP of a Savings and Loan, started his own mortgage brokerage company, followed by starting a chain of convenience stores. In 1968, he sold the stores and purchased 350 miles of abandoned, or about to be abandoned, freight railroad lines from the Burlington Northern Railroad. He formed the Washington Central Railroad, which he owned and operated until 1996. He also created the Spirit of Washington Dinner Train, which became the second largest tourist attraction in the Seattle area for over ten years. The railroad was headquartered in Yakima, Wa. where Nick became active in civic affairs.

He served as President of United Way for Yakima County, and served on the boards of the YMCA, St. Elizabeth’s Hospital, Rotary, and the Yakima Symphony. He later went on to own a Country Club and finished his career by trying his hand at farming/ranching.

Nick is survived by his beautiful wife Theresa, two great sons (Brig and Eric) and seven wonderful Grandchildren (Natalie, Casey, Henry, Connor, Oliver, Nicoli and Sasha).

The Temple Family