



## Lt. Col. William "Bill" F. Terry Jr.

August 29, 1936 - June 3, 2025

Lt Col (ret) William "Bill" F. Terry, Jr. — A gentleman who was lovingly known as Popie — passed away peacefully on June 3, 2025, at the age of 88, leaving behind a life rich with love, service, and countless travel adventure stories.

Bill was born in Connecticut, and after an early childhood in Chicago, the family left the city glitz, and moved to the country – Fox Lake in Antioch, Illinois, where they operated a rustic fishing resort. He grew up exploring the lake, helping at the resort, and attending a two-room schoolhouse before going to Antioch Township High School. A standout student and athlete, he went on to attend the University of Illinois — though his academic path included an important diversion. During a gap year in school, he went back to Antioch and by chance met Mary Shepard, a high school senior whose family had recently moved to Antioch from Lee's Summit, Missouri.

Mary's father, Shep, made it clear: if Bill wanted to build a future with Mary, he needed to earn it. Inspired by the challenge, he returned to the University of Illinois and the Air Force ROTC program with clear focus and was an A student from then on. After marriage and fatherhood diverted him from flight school, Bill continued his career using an active duty education program to earn a master's degree in Industrial Engineering.

During a 21-year Air Force career, he and his family were stationed in Japan and Hawaii while the kids were young, and stateside during the kids' school years. The family fondly recalls the trip across America returning from Hawaii

to a new home in Virginia in 1969. The trip included memorable national park stops and also watching the first moon landing live on television — a moment of wonder that reflected Bill's lifelong fascination with exploration and discovery.

While stationed at the Pentagon in DC, Bill helped found the First Presbyterian Church of Dale City and taught night classes at Prince William Community College, nurturing his lifelong passion for teaching.

After retiring from the Air Force, Bill and Mary settled in Clearwater, Florida, where he began a second career that included various combinations of Hercules Defense Electronics, small family business ventures, and some part time business teaching at St. Petersburg Junior College and occasionally at Embry-Riddle in Daytona.

His garage was full of tools, projects, fuel coils and other experiments — many devoted to his inventive ideas for improving auto fuel efficiency through fuel pre-heating and fuel-air mixtures. After installing the next new version, he would say something like “If the car blows up, you'll know why. If I make it home, I hope we'll be getting an extra mile or two per gallon.”

While the family did plenty of camping over the years, once Bill retired from his second career, Bill and Mary began full-time traveling, hiking, and swing dancing across North America. He and Mary enjoyed 12 years of full-time RV'ing as part of the Escapees RV and other clubs – putting enough miles on to wear out plenty of boots, walking sticks, and at least 2 RVs (at least that's how he justified the upgrades). They also made a little time to teach granddaughter Katie a thing or two about campfires and high-country wild blueberry picking.

After Mary passed in 2006 and with fading quick twitch driving reflexes considered, for the next 10 years, Bill continued traveling – but now by air or sea – to let someone else do most of the driving. For these adventures, he mostly frequented the other 5 inhabited continents, and even took a short visit across the Drake Passage to visit the penguins for a few days cruising near and hiking on the big icy one.

Through all of his travels, he remembered his RV'ing time with Mary in the American West and Alaska most fondly - vividly recalling stories of desolate encounters with nature, beautiful landscapes, and meeting up with old and new friends along the way.

In later years, as traveling and health became more challenging, Bill relocated to Canton, Georgia to be closer to his son Mike and granddaughter Katie and their families. There he found joy in the simple pleasures: his Coca-Cola, watching college football and golf, Chic-fil-A sandwiches and chocolate shakes, walks, and Sunday family dinners.

At the core, Popie was a gentleman and an engineer. He lived a life that included love, faith, service, and curiosity — always thinking, always tinkering to solve the puzzle at hand, and always planning the next adventure. His quiet strength, sharp mind, warm humor, and twinkle in his eye will be dearly missed and forever remembered by all who loved him.

Bill is preceded in death by his wife Mary Elizabeth (Shepard) Terry.

Bill will be lovingly remembered by: Daughter Kelly and Dave Bose, Norfolk, VA (Grandson Robert Bose III (Trip), Granddaughter Elizabeth and Guy Hamilton); Daughter Amy and John Skinner, Clearwater, FL (Granddaughter Katie and Tyler Vansant, Great Grandchildren Lily, Ben, and Sam Vansant; Grandson Randy Ezell; Granddaughter Sydney and Dylan Jarboe, Great Grandchild Jane Jarboe); Son Mike and Robin Terry, Canton, GA (Granddaughter Meagan and Dylan Chiodo, Grandson Joshua Terry)

The family appreciates the attentive and compassionate care given by the staff at the Phoenix at Union Hill and Family Hospice.

Bill's family will hold a small Celebration of Life at Mike and Robin's house on Sunday, June 22, 2025 starting at 3:30 pm. A private committal service with military honors will take place at Georgia National Cemetery in Canton, GA on Monday, June 23, 2025.

Donation Information: In lieu of flowers, if so moved, please make a donation to one of the many options available at the National Parks Foundation

website, or your own favorite charity, in Bill's honor.

# Cemetery Details

## Georgia National Cemetery

1080 Scott Hudgens Dr  
Canton, GA 30114  
(770) 479-9300