

WITH DEEP SORROW

Obituary submissions are only accepted from family members. We will accept online Funeral obituaries or newspaper obituaries if family submissions are not received by the *Canal Record* deadlines. Obituary pictures may be emailed to record@pancanalsociety.org or mailed to the Panama Canal Society office. Emailed pictures must be submitted in jpeg or tif format in 300 DPI or higher.



Ronald Leslie Atwood, 89, of Orlando, Florida, passed away on March 17, 2026. He was born on October 19, 1936, in Gloucester, Massachusetts, to Stephen and Doris Atwood, and raised with his three siblings in Gloucester.

Ron graduated from Gloucester High School in 1955, where he was the Sophomore Class President. After high school graduation, he moved to Winter Park, Florida, and attended Rollins College, where he graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in English in 1959. He attended Salem College, where he graduated with a Master's Degree in Education in 1964. Ron taught at Gloucester High School from 1962 to 1966 and again from 1968 to 1972. He taught at Valencia Community College from 1972 to 1974. He started his tenure at Orange County Public Schools in 1975 and retired with 25 years of service in 2000. Ron spent many years in Grant Services, where teachers, students, and staff benefited from his expertise in grant writing.

He met Mary Densmore on a blind date, they married on June 11, 1960, and recently celebrated their 65th anniversary. Mary and Ron started their married life in Gloucester, Massachusetts, and moved to Florida in 1973 with their four children. Mary and Ron had the opportunity to live in the Panama Canal Zone from 1966 to 1968. During this time, Ron taught English at Canal Zone College. He also sponsored the Debate Team.

Ron was a Lecture at St James Catholic Cathedral for many years. He and Mary would often attend and enjoy the parish social gatherings. Ron learned to clog and was a member of the Rebel Cloggers at St Charles Borromeo Catholic Church with his son Gerard. Ron enjoyed vacationing with his family, especially his grandchildren. Summers were spent in Massachusetts visiting extended family, as well as skiing at various resorts across the United States. Ron's focus was on providing for his family by working hard. He also created at-home To-Do lists that included grocery shopping, paying bills, and running to the post office. He enjoyed researching for vacations and other activities. He enjoyed watching games of the New England Patriots, Boston Red Sox, Tampa Bay Buccaneers, and Tampa Bay Rays. Ron could easily talk to people and, therefore, made many friends and was well known.

He is predeceased by his daughter, Kristina (Atwood) Korte; brothers, Peter Atwood and David Atwood; and sister, Stephanie Atwood.

Ron is survived by his sons, Stephen [Sandra] Atwood, Michael [Denise] Atwood, Gerard [Lori] Atwood; grandchildren, Christopher Atwood, Cassie [Ruben] Suarez, Brandon [Cayla] Atwood, Janie Atwood, Lyn Atwood,

Emily [Billy] Akos, and Keegan Butler; great-grandchildren, Isla Atwood, Jaina Atwood, Everly Suarez, and Blair Akos; and many more extended family members.

Judith (Judy) Ann White Breunle of Aurora, Colorado, died peacefully surrounded by her family on February 27, 2026.

She was born on April 10, 1937, in Camden, New Jersey, to Frank Buckman White and Elizabeth (Carson) White. Judy grew up in Merchantville, New Jersey, and lived there until meeting the love of her life, Phillip Carl Breunle, at Fort Dix at a Fourth of July celebration. Phil and Judy married on May 30, 1964, at Grace Episcopal Church in Merchantville, New Jersey, and celebrated 60 years together, until his death on January 14, 2025, in Aurora, Colo. They spent many years of their marriage traveling and living in different locations, such as New Orleans, La., the Panama Canal Zone, and Boston, Mass., and finally settled in Aurora, Colo., when Phil (COL, USA) retired at Fitzsimmons Army Medical Center in 1990.

Judy is survived by her four children, whom she loved wholeheartedly: Shawn Breunle (April) of Panama City, Fla., Melissa Breunle of Aurora, Colo., Kristan Breunle (Maria) of Colorado Springs, Colo., and Kara Snyder (David) of Orlando, Fla. She had 12 grandchildren who survive her: Brittany Hurst, Ethan Gillette, Morgan White, Zachary Breunle, and Rachel Breunle; Reese Lory and Arianna Lory; Katherine von Poks and Abigail von Poks; and Emily, Lara, and David Snyder IV, as well as a great-granddaughter, Anastasia Lory. Judy was devoted to all and had a never-ending love for them.

She was predeceased by her brother, Walter White, and her sisters, Elizabeth Campbell and Florence Sullivan.

Judy worked in banking for several years, followed by many years spent serving the community. She volunteered at local organizations based on where Phil and Judy were stationed, and upon settling in Colorado, she spent several years at the Red Cross at Fitzsimmons Army Medical Center, where she served as the Chairwoman of Volunteers. In 1988, she was awarded the Clara Barton Honor Award for Meritorious Volunteer Leadership, which



honored her commitment to giving to others. In her love and devotion for others, she entered a room of strangers and left with a multitude of new friends.

Judy enjoyed spending time with her family and friends, traveling, often jumping on a plane and spending months visiting spots up and down the East Coast, and she was always up for new adventures. She loved the beauty of the world around her and loved to fill her days in her garden, listening to the birds, witnessing the majestic views of the color palette nature offered, and looking up to the sky for the pictures the clouds would hold for her. She had an indestructible LOVE for chocolate ice cream and Coca-Cola, which were left over from the time she spent at her dad's store (soda fountain) located in the 600 block of W. Maple Ave., Merchantville, N.J., where she grew up. Judy was a member of the Panama Canal Society.



Rickey Travis Chappell died on December 13, 2025, in a car accident in Elizabeth City, North Carolina, on his way to work at the Norfolk Naval Shipyard, Portsmouth, Virginia. He died in the 2002 T-Bird he bought in honor of his Dad, who always wanted one. The license plate read: 4YOUADAD. He was only 64 years of age and left this world far too soon.

Rickey was born at the Coco Solo Hospital, Coco Solo, Canal Zone, Republic of Panama, on May 3, 1961. He was the only son of Elbert T. Chappell and Jennie Chappell and the only grandson to carry on the family name. He has



only one sibling, a sister, Nina DeTore, who lives in Chesapeake, Va. He was always so full of life and mischief. Nina's husband, Charles, was like a second Dad to him. He was so worried about his sister and brother-in-law because they are getting up in age with several medical issues.

After graduating from Cristobal High School in 1980, he worked for the Fire Division, Mt. Hope, Canal Zone. Not long afterwards, he moved to the States and settled in Chesapeake, Virginia. His first job was with Fox Lumber Yard; he also worked for many years with C.E. Thurston. Rickey was always working somewhere and really enjoyed his trade as an insulator. He loved to share his knowledge and tricks of the trade, gained over years of experience. His last position was with the Federal Government as the Continuous Training & Development Instructor for the Insulation Apprentices.

He truly loved his family and enjoyed having everyone over for his BBQ specialties as much as possible. He was a true animal lover and had three fur babies when he passed.

He was looking to retire so he could start his own BBQ business. He built several BBQ smokers for several

local businesses in the area. He took great pride in his work. He had a remarkable ability to master any task he undertook, embodying the phrase "jack of all trades and a master of all." He will be deeply missed and fondly remembered by those whose lives he touched with his genuine spirit and unmatched abilities.

In addition to his wife, Jane Guillette Chappell, he is survived by his daughter, Jennie Ann Bowen; stepson, Anthony Hemsath; sister, Nina DeTore; grandchildren, Lexi Bowen and Nora Bowen; nephews, Curtis DeTore and Philip DeTore; great-nephews, Matt DeTore and Nate DeTore; and great-niece, Allie DeTore. Rickey was a member of the Panama Canal Society.

Capt. Gerald Cooper, retired PCC pilot, died on January 5, 2026. Gerry was a member of the Balboa High School Class 1963. He attended the New York Maritime Academy. He made his home on Puget Island, Washington. Gerry was a member of the Panama Canal Society.



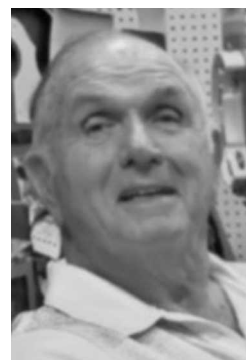
Jaye Dennis Deitz, 83, passed away peacefully at his home in Elberta, Alabama, on February 2, 2026.

He was born on June 26, 1942, in South Charleston, West Virginia, to Jennings Dennis Deitz and Madeline (Pritt) Deitz, both of whom preceded him in death.

Jaye was an exceptional athlete in his youth, earning national attention as a highly recruited high school basketball player and a two-time all-state selection. He led South Charleston High School to the West Virginia State AAA Championship during his junior year. Despite receiving dozens of scholarship offers from across the country, Jaye chose to remain close to home and committed to play basketball at West Virginia University under legendary coach Fred Schaus.

Following his playing career, Jaye returned to the Charleston area, where he owned several businesses and devoted himself to public service. He served as a firefighter for the City of South Charleston and with the 130th West Virginia Air National Guard.

In 1973, Jaye and his family relocated to the Republic of Panama, where he began a distinguished career with the Canal Zone Fire Department. Through dedication and leadership, he rose through the ranks and ultimately served as Fire Chief from 1983 to 1995. In this role, he oversaw all fire service and emergency medical operations throughout the Panama Canal Zone, including residential



areas, canal locks, U.S. military installations, and shipboard fires on transiting vessels.

During his tenure as Fire Chief, Jaye played a critical role during a period of historic transition for the Panama Canal. He authored key provisions of the 1979 Panama Canal Treaty regarding the orderly transfer of fire protection responsibilities from the United States to Panama. He was widely regarded as the resident expert on hazardous cargo transits, shipboard firefighting, and maritime emergencies. Under his leadership, the department purchased and installed a state-of-the-art foam firefighting system to protect the canal locks, an essential safeguard for one of the world's most vital waterways. He also led all fire operations throughout the canal area during the 1989 U.S. invasion of Panama and provided steady leadership under extraordinary circumstances. In preparation for the canal's eventual transfer, Jaye supervised comprehensive training programs to enhance the skills and professionalism of Panamanian bomberos, ensuring a capable and seamless transition of fire services.

Away from work, Jaye fully embraced life in Panama. He was an avid fisherman and was often selected to host visiting dignitaries on fishing expeditions in Gatun Lake, owing equally to his hospitality and skill as an angler. A gifted multi-sport athlete throughout his life, he was a standout player in the Pacific Coast Softball League for many years, known for his powerful bat and deft defensive skill at first base. Jaye also dedicated countless hours to coaching youth basketball and baseball teams in Gamboa and Balboa throughout his sons' formative years and generously passed along his athletic knowledge, discipline, and love of sport to area youth. He deeply enjoyed exploring the Panamanian interior and frequently traveled with family and friends to the Pacific beaches and the mountainous Volcán region. He loved country music and found great joy in playing guitar, and he was known for his dry sense of humor and gift for storytelling, always able to captivate a room with a well-timed remark or a story told just right.

In 2002, Jaye and Nikki made their home in Elberta, Alabama. Orthodox through marriage, he became an active member of St. Athanasios Greek Orthodox Church in Gulf Shores. Jaye was a devoted parishioner and a driving force in securing sponsors for the church's annual golf tournament fundraiser, contributing significantly to its continued success.

Jaye is survived by his beloved wife, Nikki L. (Rigas) Deitz; his sons, George Deitz and his wife Kristine Wagner of Trussville, Ala., and Alexander Deitz and his wife Sangeeta Mahadevan of Great Neck, N.Y.; his sister, Linda (Deitz) Good of Winfield, W.V.; his sister-in-law, Toni (Rigas) Loucas of Chester, W.V.; five grandchildren, Luke Deitz and his wife Rachel, Mark Deitz, Koren Deitz, Surabhi Deitz, and Maya Deitz; and one great-grandson, Jesse Deitz. He was preceded in death by his sister, Joyce (Deitz) Schoolcraft.

Jaye will be remembered as a devoted husband, father, grandfather, and great-grandfather, a respected leader and mentor, and a man whose integrity, courage, humor,

faith, love of WVU sports, and lifelong commitment to service left a lasting mark on all who knew him. Jaye was a member of the Panama Canal Society.

Aymée Lugo Diaz, 79, passed away on April 17, 2026. She was born on August 12, 1946, in Mayagüez, Puerto Rico, to Eliezer Lugo and Lydia Lugo. She was a graduate of Balboa High School class of 1965.



Aymée spent her childhood growing up in the Panama Canal Zone before moving to Texas to pursue higher education at the University of North Texas, where she earned her bachelor's degree in marketing. After graduating, she moved to Puerto Rico, where she worked at Fomento, a government-owned corporation that promotes investment and economic growth in Puerto Rico. She moved to Oklahoma, where her life took a new and meaningful turn. It was in Oklahoma that she met the love of her life, Tomas Diaz. The two were married in 1980 and shared a devoted life together. They later moved to Venezuela, where they welcomed two children, before returning to Oklahoma in 1988.

Aymée lived a vibrant and full life, marked by her deep love for family, friends, and culture. She enjoyed salsa music—especially Marc Anthony—as well as merengue and 1960s rock. She loved dancing, spending time with friends, going to parties, and traveling. One of her most memorable trips was to Israel in 2019. She also enjoyed reading, decorating, writing in journals, and taking walks.

In her professional life, Aymée owned a boutique in Venezuela. She also worked in personnel as a Human Resources Director and Affirmative Action Office at Rose State College for nearly 20 years and served as Vice President of OPES, Inc., an environmental engineering company founded and owned by her husband.

She will be remembered as a loving and devoted wife, mother, daughter, friend, and grandmother. Aymée deeply cherished her children, grandchildren, and family, and expressed her love through her warmth, energy, and presence in their lives.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Tomas Diaz (2022); her father, Eliezer D. Lugo (2002); her mother, Lydia Lugo (2010); her sister, Lydia Long (2007). She is survived by her daughter, Michelle Diaz of Norman, Oklahoma; her son, Miguel Diaz of Tampa, Florida; her brother, Eli Lugo of Copperas Cove, Texas; her sister, Madeleine Lugo Raffler, and her husband, John Raffler of Norman, Oklahoma; her sister, Toy Barnard of Norman, and her niece, Brenda Barnard in 1997. Her grandchildren, Gavin Deluca and Jayden Smith; niece, Kristin Raffler; and two nephews, Eric Raffler and Clyde Long de Lugo. She was a member of the Panama Canal Society.



Mary Catherine Watson Goodrich Gusler passed away peacefully at the age of 94 on February 17, 2026 after a long struggle with Alzheimer's disease.

She was born at home in Waycross, Georgia, on April 14, 1931, the youngest of the seven children of Berta Lou Tomlinson and Jesse Hall Watson. She graduated from Wacona High School and was a student nurse at Piedmont Hospital in Atlanta when she met Eddie Goodrich, a Georgia Tech student. She was always called Mary by her family, but Eddie decided that she looked like a Catherine. That is the name most people knew her by, although her numerous Watson nieces and nephews still called her Aunt Mary.

Eddie and Catherine married in 1950 and had Gail, their first child, while living in Georgia. In December of 1953, they moved to the Panama Canal Zone, embarking on an adventure that changed their lives completely. Her father told her not to "go down to that jungle" and have any babies. They had three children in Panama, despite his advice: Mark, Cathy, and Paul. They loved living in the Canal Zone, making many lifelong friends and learning about Panama and its culture. The Canal was an important part of our lives, as we went out to "our island" in our small boat on Sundays with friends and family. We all learned to swim and waterski on Gatun Lake.

Catherine had always been afraid of the water after seeing people drown when she was a child, but in the Canal Zone, there were swimming pools, rivers, lakes, the ocean, and the Panama Canal. She knew her children would be in the water all the time, so she overcame her fears and learned to swim! She was an "expert" side-stroke swimmer, as she never quite mastered putting her head under water, but fear was not in her nature.

She attended Canal Zone College and earned her Associate's degree in 1967. She then went to work, first as a PE teacher in elementary schools and later trained as a nuclear medicine technician at Gorgas Hospital. Her character and her years as a student nurse in Atlanta made her an excellent health care worker who cared for her patients, whether they spoke English or Spanish.

She retired in 1987, and she and Eddie moved to Apollo Beach, Florida. They loved their house on a canal that led to Tampa Bay and used the pool and boat to entertain their children, grandchildren, old friends from the Canal Zone, and many new friends! She participated in many community activities, including the Apollo Beach Women's Club. She was very active in the DAR and the Colonial Dames in Tampa. She was proud to be the youngest DAR regent ever while still in the Canal Zone.

She first went to Freedom Plaza to drive a friend to a meeting and fell in love with it immediately. She went home to tell Eddie that she knew where they were going when they got old. After Eddie was diagnosed with Alzheimer's, they moved to Freedom Plaza in 2006.

Catherine was active in the scholarship committee, the chorus, and was in many theatrical productions.

Eddie passed away in 2010, and in 2013, Mom married Lee Gusler, a neighbor at Freedom Plaza. They were great companions, traveled, and enjoyed each other's families. Later, Mom also developed Alzheimer's, but was able to live in her apartment for two years after she was bedbound, thanks to the wonderful caregivers of Innovative Health Services. After moving to Plaza West, the caregivers there were equally attentive and kind.

Catherine is survived by her four children and their spouses: Gail and Jess, Mark and Lauri, Cathy and Sam, and Paul and Beth. She is also survived by her 11 grandchildren, six great-grandchildren, her husband, Lee, and his family, her sister-in-law, Connie Goodrich Brantley, as well as her many nieces and nephews and their families.

Catherine always expressed how blessed she was to have two wonderful husbands and a loving extended family. She traveled the world and enjoyed every minute of life. She always had a positive outlook on life and a truly generous spirit. She was a member of the Panama Canal Society.

Peter D. Hendrickson, 77, of Hudson, Ohio, died December 18, 2025, after a fall.

Peter was born in Ancon, Panama. He was raised in the Canal Zone as a "Canal Zone Brat." His father was Lockmaster at Miraflores Locks, which allowed Peter to live a blissful childhood full of adventures in the sun, amidst trees full of mangoes and pineapples, along with monkeys and coati-mundis. He grew up playing on sandy beaches, swimming and fishing in the Pacific Ocean, playing football, cayuca racing, and jungle exploring. Joyful and lasting friendships played a significant role in school and the Scouts, where he was inducted into the Order of the Arrow.

After graduating from Balboa High School in 1966, he attended Canal Zone College and took an electrical apprenticeship. When time allowed, he raced his Norton motorcycle competitively. Then, in 1969, he joined the Navy Seabees. He met his wife, Lida Sprague of Hudson, Ohio, in the New Orleans airport en route to training in nearby Gulfport. They married in 1971 at Christ Church Episcopal in Hudson, Peter choosing American citizenship soon after. Peter and Lida made their home and life in Hudson for all their years together. Panama remained his first home, though, with "Peter Panama" visiting his old stomping grounds and seeing dear friends there most recently in 2023, accompanied by grandson Billy.

Peter was gifted in photography, fine woodworking, fixing things no one else could, sailing, and yarn-spinning. He devoted 22 years to Hudson EMS as a volunteer EMT because he believed helping other people is why we are put on earth.



He was a proud IBEW electrician for decades, working locally, as well as in Alaska, allowing him to have outdoor adventures with the family - from Denali exploration to boating and fishing in the Bay of Alaska. However, his most important roles were of beloved husband, father, grandfather, and uncle - wherever those relationships took him (adventures with the Alaska contingents, a cross-country road trip with Bianca, a COVID-inspired Yellowstone stay with Billy, West Coast and Caribbean travel with Lida, and on and on).

Peter was predeceased by his parents, Oliver and Solveig Hendrickson, and siblings Gerald and Patricia.

Peter leaves stunned and bereft wife of 55 years, Lida ("Lili"), his daughter, Liz ("Shasta") Hendrickson Carroll, and his grandchildren, Bianca Olivera (Cooper) and William ("Billy") Carroll, all of Hudson. He leaves his son, Christian Hendrickson (Diane), and his grandchildren, Lily and Christian ("CC"), all of Wasilla, Alaska, as well as his nephew, Webb (Chrisanne) Sprague, and his niece, Caroline (Doug) Torres.



Mary Jean Langdon, lovingly known as "Nonni," passed away on April 3, 2026, at the age of 72 in Schulenburg, Texas, after a courageous battle with colorectal cancer.

She was born on May 21, 1953, in Rockford, Illinois, to Joseph Thomas and Rita Phyllis Eytalis. She lived in the Panama Canal Zone for 10 years, where she graduated from Balboa High School in 1971. She then moved to Texas, where she made her home and raised two daughters.

Mary Jean had a gift for making life feel special. Every holiday and birthday was thoughtfully celebrated with decorations, homemade meals, and meaningful touches. She was incredibly creative, sewing everything from Barbie clothes to Halloween costumes. She loved crafting, cooking, libraries, bluebonnets, The Beach Boys, classic movies, and cross-stitch. She always thought of others first, had a wicked sense of humor, a remarkable vocabulary, and a love for sharing food, culture, art, and music from around the world.

Above all, her greatest joy was her grandchildren. As their Nonni, she made life magical, filling their days with love, imagination, and laughter. Her tall tales of being a gypsy, a pirate, a fortune teller, and an outlaw brought adventure and wonder to their world.

She is survived by her daughters, Jennifer Schramek of Schulenburg and Carolyn Klam and her husband, Jason, of Dubina; her beloved grandchildren, Madison Klam, Caitlyn Klam, Brycen Schramek, Carson Klam, and Brock Schramek; her brother Joe Eytalis and his wife, Sue, of The Villages, Florida; her brother Patrick Eytalis and his wife, Julie, of Pecatonica, Illinois; and numerous nieces and nephews.

She was preceded in death by her parents; her

brother, Mike Eytalis; and her sister, Maryann Eytalis Brodeur. Mary Jean was a member of the Panama Canal Society.



John (Jack) M. Mallia passed away peacefully on January 21, 2026, of natural causes at the age of 98. He was born on May 1, 1927, in Valparaiso, Chile, to the late Felix and Mary Mallia. The family lived in Chile until 1935, then moved to the Panama Canal Zone, where John attended Balboa High School. After High School, John started his government career with the U.S. Air Force Supply Division. On January 5, 1953, he was employed as a Canal Zone Customs Inspector and was later promoted to a Canal Zone Investigator. Due to the Panama Canal Treaty, the Customs Division was terminated, and John spent the last few years of government service with the General Service Bureau.

On July 14, 1982, John retired and moved to Dothan, Alabama. He enjoyed being with his family and Canal Zone friends and especially playing golf. He played golf well until his eighties.

As a dutiful and unselfish son, John took care of his parents in the Zone and then after in Dothan, Alabama, until his mom's death at 95 years old. On November 13, 2019, John moved to Providence Assisted Living in Ozark, Ala., and then resided at the Oakview Manor Nursing Home until his death.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Mary and Felix Mallia; his sister and brother-in-law, Mary and Earl Mullins, Sr., and his brother Louis Mallia. He is survived by his brother Thomas Mallia (deceased) (Janice) of Mandeville, Louisiana. His nephew, James Mullins (Karen) of Arnold, Md., was constantly there to help him through the years. He is also survived by many nieces and nephews, as well as grand and great-great-nieces and nephews. John was a long-time member of the Columba Catholic Church in Dothan, Alabama, and the Panama Canal Society, and he enjoyed reading the *Canal Record*.

Major General James Parker Maloney (U.S. Army Retired), 94, passed away on February 6, 2026.

Jim was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to James Patrick Maloney and Kathleen Parker Maloney. Jim's father was a career Army officer, and growing up, Army life had his family, brother Thomas, and sister Patricia, moving many times. On December 7, 1941, Jim and his family were attending Mass at Fort Monroe, Virginia, when the priest announced that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor. As Jim said, this changed everything and the lives of all. He



attended five grade schools and two high schools, including Rusk Elementary and Austin High School in El Paso. He graduated from Balboa High in the Panama Canal Zone, attended Canal Zone Junior College and Columbia University in New York City, and graduated from Texas Western College (TWC), now UTEP, with a B.S. in Civil Engineering, and was the ROTC Distinguished Military Graduate. Later, he received an M.S. in Mass Communications from Shippensburg University, Shippensburg, Pennsylvania.

He was a graduate of the Advanced Management Program from the University of Southern California, the Army War College, and other Army schools. While attending TWC, he met the love of his life, Mariwyn Grace Blythe from El Paso. They were students together and married upon his graduation in 1954 at the Center Chapel on Fort Bliss, Texas. His first duty station was Fort Bliss, and his last was Fort Bliss, serving as the Commanding General of the Air Defense Artillery Center and the Commandant of the Air Defense Artillery School. They lived in Quarters 302, the Commanding General's quarters, across the street from the Center Chapel where they were married. They had come full circle.

In the thirty-one years Jim served the nation, his family of five moved twenty-six times. He served in South Vietnam, Korea, and Germany, ten years in command positions, ten years with the Army staff in the Pentagon, and eleven years in other staff assignments and schools. In his last assignment at the Pentagon, he served as Director of Weapon Systems, with responsibility for all Army RDA programs and for testifying before Congress on these programs, which included the "big five": M-1 Tank, Apache Helicopter, Patriot Guided Missile System, Bradley Fighting Vehicle, and Black Hawk Helicopter. He concurrently served as Chief of the Army's Space Program and was a member of the Military Liaison Committee to the Defense Nuclear Agency.

After retiring from the Army, Jim served as a Vice President of the El Paso Electric Company, manager of Raytheon Company's El Paso operations, a military consultant, and manager of the Blythe Ranch, a family business. Among his awards are the Distinguished Service Medal, Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry, Combat Infantryman's badge, Purple Heart, the Chief of Chaplains Order of Aaron and Hur, and the Senior Parachutist badge. He was the University of Texas at El Paso "Outstanding Ex-Student" in 1983, and in 2016, was inducted into the U.S. Army ROTC National Hall of Fame. In 2006, he was awarded the Christian Petrus Fox Citizen of the Year and honored at the Air Defense Artillery Tattoo at Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

He was a founder and director of the United Bank of El Paso Del Norte. Jim was a member of the Rotary Club of El Paso, the Association of the U.S. Army, the Military Order of the Purple Heart, the Military Order of the World Wars, and the UTEP Alumni Academy of Civil Engineers. His community service included boards of the: El Paso Symphony Orchestra; Museum of Art; Keep El Paso Beautiful; Salvation Army; University of Texas at El Paso

President's Associates and Matrix Society; UTEP College of Science; El Paso Airport, and the State of Texas' Military Preparedness Commission. He served on the Paisano Baptist Encampment board near Alpine, Texas, and was a member of the First Baptist Church, El Paso.

He is survived by his wife of 71 years, Mariwyn Maloney; daughter, Patricia Light (John); son, James Maloney (Cristina); and son, Michael Maloney (Diana), as well as seven grandchildren and sixteen great-grandchildren. He was a man of strong faith, high morals, love of family, and dedication to country.

Daniel John Mullins (Danny) passed away peacefully on January 16, in his sleep at the age of 79 years. Born on February 28, 1946, in Ancon, Canal Zone, Panama. Danny was the beloved son of the late Earl and Mary Mullins of Gamboa, C.Z. He was the second of seven children.

He grew up in the Canal Zone playing among the jungle and the Panama Canal. He attended Balboa High School, then attended Canal Zone College, and then enlisted in the U.S. Navy. Danny served on the USS *Enterprise* and the USS *Hancock* and was honorably discharged in 1972 after 6 years in the Navy. He then worked as a Fuels Management Specialist at US Navy Shipyard in Alameda, Calif., and retired from Naval Air Station Pensacola with 25 years of Service.

He was married to Charlene Zeno, and they had two sons, Charles and Darren. Danny enjoyed motorcycles, aviation shows, RVs, and walking. He was a very active and social person and made friends easily.

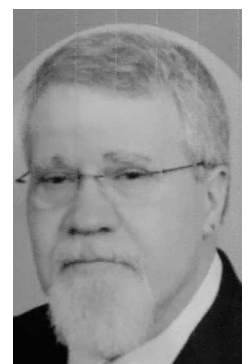
After he retired and settled in Dothan, Alabama. He was a loving and caring son to his parents and took care of them until their death. In addition, he cared for his elderly uncle, John Mallia, until his death.

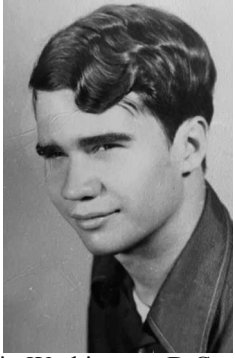
He is survived by his sons, Charles Mullins and Erica Mullins, and two grandchildren, Ariana and Amaya, and Darren Mullins, family members; Earl and Sue Mullins, Clifford Mullins, Jim and Karen Mullins, Kathy and Bettie Hendricks, Robert Mullins (deceased), Joe and Debbie Mullins. He is also survived by many loving nieces and nephews.



George F. Nadeau, Jr., age 69, passed away suddenly on January 27, 2026, in Front Royal, Virginia.

George was born in Gorgas Hospital to George F. and Grayce Lydia Nadeau. George attended Balboa High School and later joined the Canal Zone Police Force. He was a proud member of the Boy Scout Chiriqui Lodge #391, obtained his





Order of the Arrow Badge, and later was on the staff at Camp Chagres.

After leaving the Canal Zone, George spent his working life in law enforcement and retired in 2016 from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives after over 32 years of service.

Most recently, he became a Simulator Instructor at the National Law Enforcement Officers Museum in Washington, D.C., and enjoyed meeting the many visitors who came from everywhere to the Museum.

He was a member of the Panama Canal Society and attended several of the Annual Reunions over the years. He will be buried with his parents in the Corozal American Cemetery.

George is survived by his wife of 25 years, Brenda, of Front Royal, Va.; two sisters, Karen Price of College Station, Texas, and Lana Gagnon of Jacksonville, Fla.; his brother, Randall Nedeadu of Jacksonville, Fla.; and numerous nieces and nephews.



Reverend Clarence C. Payne passed away on Friday, February 6, 2026. "...Become a full part of life, so in the golden years of life we can look back and find more than sermons written, more than miles logged, more than coffee consumed. That we may find those ventures of life for which we may truly be proud." - Excerpt from *The Danger of Emptiness*, a sermon by Clarence Payne (1963).

Clarence was born on January 1, 1934, in St. Louis, Missouri, to Arvid S. Payne and Mildred Berberich. He often told stories of his childhood, including how he developed his love for peanuts and pretzels while tagging along with his parents to neighborhood bars in St. Louis. One of his favorite memories was a New Year's Eve outing that also happened to be the night before his birthday. He recalled standing on the bartop as the room erupted with cheers. Not understanding New Year's Eve, he assumed everyone was celebrating his birthday. Our family made it a tradition to celebrate Clarence every New Year's Eve.

Clarence's father later had four more children during his second marriage to Alma Copeland. Clarence was raised as the eldest of five siblings. Growing up, he worked alongside his father in the family television repair shop. Because of his parents' divorce, Clarence was forced to become independent at a young age, but he found community and belonging in the local Presbyterian church in St. Louis, often attending alone. He frequently shared that the church gave him a sense of home and hope, inspiring his lifelong call to ministry and his desire to give others what had helped him so deeply.

That calling grew stronger during his studies at

Washington University, where he majored in sociology and became involved in Youth for Christ. In 1953, at age 19, Clarence volunteered at the Billy Graham crusade in St. Louis. He became so immersed in the work that he nearly failed his classes that semester, but the experience solidified his dedication to the ministry. After graduating from Washington University, he continued his studies at McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago.

Clarence received his first pastoral call in 1958 to serve as assistant pastor at Macalester Presbyterian Church in St. Paul, Minnesota. He liked to joke that he was excited to move there because he loved blondes and was sure Minnesota would deliver. On his very first day in St. Paul, in July 1958, he arrived at the home of the head pastor. He was greeted at the door by a young, petite Colombian woman with dark, curly hair, an international student living there during her studies at Macalester College. Her name was Rosita Menendez. Clarence always said it was love at first sight.

Rosita was preparing to visit her family in Colombia in February 1959, but Clarence was unwilling to let her leave without first putting a ring on her finger, so that's what he did! While she was away, he wrote to her once or twice every day until she finally invited him to Colombia to get married. Clarence drove from St. Paul to Miami to catch a flight to Barranquilla, Colombia, where they were married on April 25, 1959, marking the beginning of a loving, adventurous, and devoted 56-year marriage. Clarence and Rosita began their married life in St. Paul. In 1961, they moved to New Jersey so Clarence could pursue a master's degree in counseling at Princeton Theological Seminary. After graduating, they briefly returned to St. Paul, where their daughter, Anita, was born in 1962. Two months later, in August 1962, they moved to the Republic of Panama, where Clarence was called to serve at Gatun Union Church in the former Canal Zone. This marked the beginning of 28 years in Panama, where they also welcomed their son, David Payne, in 1965.

In 1964, Clarence was called to serve as head pastor at Balboa Union Church, where he stayed until 1969. In 1969, Clarence and his family moved to Florida so he could pursue a PhD at Florida State University. Soon after arriving, Dr. Gibbs Ulmer Miller hired Clarence as a part-time, interim pastor at the First Presbyterian Church of Monticello. On October 31, 1969, the Paynes moved to Monticello for nine wonderful months, forming friendships that would last a lifetime. One of those friendships eventually led Anita to meet her future husband, Morris Henry Miller.

In the spring of 1970, the governor of the Panama Canal Zone, Brig. Gen. Walter P. Leber called Clarence to offer him a position on his staff as Youth Advisor to the Governor. Clarence accepted the position, and the family returned to the Canal Zone that summer. This marked the beginning of a 20-year career with the Panama Canal administration. During this time, Clarence continued serving Balboa Union Church as a Sunday school teacher, part-time pastor, and faithful leader.

In 1990, after 28 years in Panama, Clarence retired

from the Panama Canal Commission as Ombudsman/Administrative Assistant to the Administrator, and returned to full-time ministry as Executive Associate Pastor at the National Presbyterian Church in Washington, D.C., where he served until 1997. During this period, his son David passed away from cancer in 1995.

In 1997, Clarence and Rosita moved to Tallahassee, Florida, to be closer to their daughter Anita, her husband Morris, and their five children. Clarence served as pastor of Lafayette Presbyterian Church from 1997 until his retirement in 2002.

Following retirement, Clarence and Rosita traveled extensively, visiting friends and family around the world, officiating weddings, funerals, and baptisms, while also playing active roles in their grandchildren's lives, taking them on adventures near and far. After 56 years of marriage, Rosita passed away in November 2015.

Dancing was a beloved family pastime. After Rosita's passing, Clarence took up ballroom dancing, where he met Lynne Barrera. Their friendship grew into a life partnership that brought Clarence joy, laughter, and love during the final eight years of his life.

Clarence never lost his zest for life. He continued officiating weddings for family and friends, including his grandson Morris Payne and his wife Asia Johnson in 2017, and most recently, the wedding of his grandson David Gibbes and his husband John Gardner in September 2025, where Clarence not only officiated but joyfully danced the night away.

Clarence is survived by his life partner, Lynne Barrera; his daughter, Anita Payne Miller, and her husband, Morris Henry Miller; his five grandchildren and their partners: Morris Payne (Asia), Rose (Rodrigo), David (John), Paul (Stephanie), and Reyna (Ernie); his three great-grandchildren, Mia, Aliyah, and Amira; his sisters, Bonnie Shema, Linda Kuchar, and Janet Thomason; and many beloved nieces, nephews, cousins, and friends near and far. Clarence was a member of the Panama Canal Society.

Gino Reinhardt, 64, passed away in Tallahassee, Fla, on March 15, 2026. Gino's next of kin is his son, Dennis Reinhardt, and his mother, Jeannette Reinhardt.



Ann Batcheldor Merlino Richardson, beloved daughter, sister, wife, mother, grandmother, teacher, and business owner, passed away peacefully in Columbia, South Carolina, in 2025 at the age of 86.

She was born on September 13, 1939, in Yazoo City, Mississippi, to Ruth and Dallas Batcheldor. From an early age, she lived a life shaped by movement, service, and adventure—as a military dependent, later as a military spouse, a teacher, traveler, and entrepreneur. She lived in eight U.S. states

(SC, VA, AL, GA, FL, MS, IL, MN) and two foreign countries (Panama and Japan), reflecting a lifetime of global perspective and adaptability.

In the early 1960s, she traveled the skies as a stewardess for Eastern Airlines, stoking her passion for travel that led her to fill multiple passports—so many that extra pages were often required. She began her college education in the Republic of Panama, completed her undergraduate degree at the University of Alabama, and earned her Master's in Education from Old Dominion University.

A dedicated educator, she served as a Department of Defense school teacher in the Panama Canal Zone (1963-1966 and 1991-2001), where she formed lifelong friendships and lasting memories. Her years in the Panama Canal Zone were among her most treasured, and she remained closely connected to that community for the rest of her life.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Steve Merlino, a U.S. Army serviceman who was killed in action in Vietnam in 1971. She met this profound loss with strength and determination, raising their two sons and continuing to live with purpose.

In 2001, she made Columbia, South Carolina, her home, where she founded Brighter Solutions, a home improvement business she operated until 2025. Through her work, she remained active, engaged, and impactful in her community well into her 80s.

She is survived by her loving sons, Steve Jr (Jackie) and David; her cherished grandchildren, Steven (Carmen) and Ashleigh; her brother Bud (Ellen); and numerous nieces and nephews. She is also remembered by countless friends and former students across the world, many with deep ties to Panama, where her legacy as an educator and friend remains strong.

Her life was marked by resilience, curiosity, and a deep commitment to family and service. Whether in the classroom, in business, or across the globe, she led with strength and heart. She was a member of the Panama Canal Society.

Leslie O'Brien Sanders, 68, of New Braunfels, Texas, went home to the Lord on March 23, 2026, in New Braunfels. She was born on April 19, 1957, in Panama City, Panama, to Charles and Sally (Inman) O'Brien. Leslie graduated from Balboa High School class of 1975 in Panama, earned her undergraduate degree from Southwest Texas State University, and later completed her graduate degree at the University of Oklahoma.



Leslie's professional life was rich and varied. Over the years, she managed construction projects, taught elementary school, served as a medical information specialist, and ultimately became a supervisor for Medical

Information Technology Specialists within the Department of the Army. She earned many awards and accolades as a Department of the Army civilian. Although she was new to military life when she married her husband, Sandy, she embraced it wholeheartedly. She quickly became an active and devoted volunteer, managing installation thrift shops and establishing and facilitating military family support groups at each of their many assignments. Leslie discovered that being a military spouse was not only vital to the strength of military communities but also deeply fulfilling to her personally.

She was preceded in death by her parents, Charles (Chuck) J. O'Brien and Sarah (Sally) L. O'Brien (Inman).

Leslie is survived by her husband of 35 years, Sandy; her children, Christopher John Wolff (Lacy), Stephanie Urban-Wolff (Ryan), Michelle L. Sanders, Hilary R. Sanders, and Stefanie A. Belton (Thomas). Her beloved grandchildren also survive her—Jackson Wolff, Dane Wolff, Sofia Munson, Myles Munson, Tayden Sanders, Elijah Sanders, Bryce Gugel, Zane Gugel, Everleigh Belton, and Easton Belton—as well as her siblings, Sharon O'Brien, Kenneth O'Brien (Vicki), and Melanie O'Brien. She also had numerous dearly loved nieces and nephews.

Leslie cherished the lifelong friendships she formed while growing up in Panama and remained in close contact with many of those friends throughout her life. Her greatest joy was her family and friends. She adored her grandchildren and was always ready with wise counsel, a listening ear, and unwavering love. Leslie will be deeply missed for her intellect, her generous spirit, and her quiet, steady strength. She was a member of the Panama Canal Society.



Maria J. Smead, age 98, originally from Nancito, Panama, passed away peacefully on Wednesday, January 7, 2026, one week away from her 99th birthday.

Maria was born on January 14, 1927, in Nancito, Panama. She spent many cherished years living in the Panama Canal Zone while married and raising her family, a time in her life she spoke of fondly. She graduated from beautician school and took great pride in her education and work ethic. Maria embraced new places and experiences with enthusiasm and curiosity, and, as a true world traveler, visited many countries. She was excited about being present for the launch of Apollo 11 at the Kennedy Space Center in 1969.

Family was the center of Maria's life. She was especially proud that her family lineage was known for long, full lives, and she was blessed to be a great-great-grandmother. Those who knew her will remember her sharp wit, open heart, and her funny, warm, and endlessly engaging personality. Maria loved cooking and hosting gatherings, gardening, bowling, fishing, shopping, and making ceramics and other crafts for her family and friends.

She was famous for spending long hours on the phone, happily chatting with family and friends. McDonald's will miss Maria as she loved getting their chicken nuggets and fries. We will miss her saying that she did not like sweets, only to find empty or missing chocolate containers hidden away!

A devout Catholic, Maria was deeply involved in church organizations and was an active member of the Panama Canal Zone Ladies Club and the Panama Canal Society, where she built lasting friendships and made a meaningful impact in her community.

Maria was preceded in death by her parents; her beloved husband, Howard Smead; her son, Robert Smead; her brother, Agustin; and her sisters, Rosa, Sixta, Cristobalina, Carlo, and Servilia.

She is survived by her daughter, Helen Burns (Christopher); her son, Richard Smead (Patricia); grandchildren Angie Smead-Rodriguez (Dimas), Michael Martin (Elaine), Allen Smead (Sabina), Annette Black, and Sara Stucky (Lucas), along with numerous grand and great-great grandchildren and extended family throughout Panama and the United States who will cherish her memory.

Linda Daniel Stevenson,

age 66, passed away peacefully in her sleep on April 5, 2026. Linda is the wife of Davis Stevenson of the Panama Canal Zone, and Davis was the son of June (Rowley) and Davis Stevenson. She never got the chance to visit Panama. Linda was born on February 9, 1960, in Decatur, Georgia. She attended North Georgia College, where she began shaping



the compassionate and resilient spirit that would define her life. Linda was a woman of deep faith, grounded in her love for her Savior, Jesus Christ, which carried her through life's joys and challenges. She was devoted to her beloved husband, Davis Stevenson, whom she lovingly called her soulmate and "knight in shining armor." Together, they shared a beautiful marriage and celebrated their 30th wedding anniversary in January 2026—a testament to their enduring love and commitment. Linda had a special place in her heart for animals and was known for her kindness, warmth, and nurturing nature. Her love extended to family, friends, and all who had the privilege of knowing her.

Michael J. Waters, 68, of

Riverview, Florida passed away peacefully at home of natural causes on March 4, 2026. Mike was born in Ancon, Canal Zone, Panama; the son of the late John M. Waters and Mildred Croker Waters. He grew up in Gamboa, Canal Zone as a free spirit in a land of beauty and filled with childhood adventure. Later, he moved to Miami, Fla. and then to Nashua, New Hampshire.



Prior to his retirement, Mike had been employed as a supervisor at the Aviation Authority, Hillsborough County for many years. He enjoyed the camaraderie found there among such great people and continued dear friendships long after retirement.

Mike is survived by his sister, Susan Waters Eytalis and brother-in-law, Joseph Eytalis of The Villages, Fla. He is also survived by his two nephews and their families: Joseph Eytalis, III, and wife Paige (Simmons) Eytalis of Fayetteville, Ga., and Benjamin Eytalis, and wife Carrie (Kizer) Eytalis of Riverview, Fla. Grandnieces and nephews, Madison, Samantha, Dana, Maxwell and Oliver. Mike was predeceased by his parents, as well as his eldest sister, Patricia Waters Ryan. Mike was a member of the Panama Canal Society.

Captain **Leon Young**, 86, of McLean, Virginia, passed away peacefully on Tuesday, March 17, 2026, at his daughter's residence in Leesburg, VA, surrounded by the love of his family and comforted by his Catholic faith.

Born July 13, 1939, in Montclair, New Jersey, as Leon Dobrowolski, he experienced the loss of his father, Leon Dobrowolski, at the age of three. Through his mother's remarriage, he was blessed with a devoted stepfather, whom he later chose to honor through adoption at the age of 21, taking the name Young—a reflection of both love and family unity that remained central to his life.

Leon lived a life rooted in faith, service, and gratitude. He proudly served in the United States Air Force

from 1960 to 1964, achieving the rank of E-4. Following his military service, he answered his lifelong passion for flight, building a distinguished career as a commercial pilot with Allegheny Airlines and USAir, and retiring from US Airways after 33 years and from NetJets after 18 years. He found great joy not only in flying, but in the privilege of traveling the world and witnessing God's creation from above.

Leon had a deep appreciation for craftsmanship and history, which was most evident in his love of antique cars. He delighted in restoring, admiring, and sharing them with others, often using these moments to connect with family and friends. He was a member of the Panama Canal Society.

Above all, Leon was a devoted husband, father, and grandfather. His greatest joy was his family, whom he loved deeply and guided with quiet strength, generosity, and unwavering faith. He leaves behind a legacy of love, integrity, and devotion that will continue to live on in those who knew him.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Frank Young and Estelle Young.

Leon is survived by his wife, Tanya Rose Young; his two daughters, Terry Holmes and Tracy Coffman of Leesburg, Va.; his son-in-law, Brett Coffman; and his two cherished grandchildren, Brittany Coffman and Connor Coffman. Inurnment with military honors will be held at a later date at Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington, Va.

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