

Christopher Roy Thomas

Christopher R. Thomas Sr., 79, of Norristown, PA, died at Einstein Montgomery Hospital in East Norriton, PA, on 11 May 2018, after a brief illness.

Raised in Cudahy, WI, "Chris" would go on to become a naval aviator after graduating from the Naval Academy with the Class of 1960. He served our country in Vietnam earning two Distinguished Flying Crosses with Combat V, a Bronze Star with Combat V, 19 Combat Air Medals with Combat V and the Purple Heart. He retired after 20 years of distinguished service. Being a naval aviator was "the best job [he] ever had."

Chris was a creative man who did not tolerate ignorance and pursued learning in all corners. Growing up, his favorite place was the library. Known for his colorful language and incredible vocabulary, he was never without a book. Whenever we needed to know something, we turned to him. He always dispensed learning with generosity and often a touch of sarcasm.

He was a talented aviator who worked hard at his craft. He flew helicopter gunships in Vietnam and flew off numerous aircraft carriers including the first Around the World cruise on ENTERPRISE (CVN-65). As evidence of his ability, he was the first helicopter pilot to complete a full auto-rotation onto a carrier deck at night. However, he was also a modest man and few people knew this about him.

He enjoyed spending time with family, working on his house or his car, exercising, or helping his kids with their various projects. These activities gave him a peaceful, easy feeling.

His only regret was not achieving his dream of owning a shrubbery with not one or two, but three shrubberies, creating a terraced effect, with a path down the middle. He is survived by his wife, Peggy; and three children, Chris Jr. '91 of San Diego, CA, Rebecca Thomas Audet (Rejean) of New Castle, NH, and Michael Patrick McLaughlin '96 (Stephanie) of Manassas, VA; four grandchildren, Claire, Teddy, Fiona and Maeve; brothers, Bill and Gary; and his sister, Pat. Chris was predeceased by his father, Raymond; stepmother, Penny; and his mother, Polly Findley.

September 2018 Shipmate