



Kirk Duncan Ransom

January 18, 1941 - April 26, 2026

Kirk Duncan Ransom, USAF, Retired, flew off into the wild blue yonder on Sunday, April 26, 2026. He died as he lived, filled with love and surrounded by his girls. Major Ransom was a decorated veteran who served as a pilot in the Vietnam War and did 21 years active duty. Preceded in death by his parents and his siblings, he lived a long and full life and deeply loved his family.

While flying was his passion, Kirk's true love was his wife, Suzanne. On their first date he declared his intention to marry her and for 59 years, they kissed, fought, laughed and loved deeply.

Kirk and his twin brother Kent were born in Louisville, Kentucky in 1941, to John and Winnifred Ransom. They joined their older siblings, Richard and Susan. Kirk's childhood was spent raising a pet skunk, chasing reptiles and dreaming of flying planes and working on the railroad. Curiosity fueled his world and would do so for the rest of his life.

When he was 14 years old, the family moved to Minnesota. Kirk graduated from Orono High School in 1959 and went on to study zoology at University of Minnesota, Duluth. A prankster at heart, he once changed every light bulb in the dormitory common areas red - a story that never failed to make him laugh. On graduating in 1963, Kirk was commissioned as an officer in the US Air Force, the beginning of a grand adventure. Following pilot training, Kirk was assigned to fly the first squadron of the RF-4C, the reconnaissance version of the Phantom II. The 16th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron (TRS) flew their planes to Vietnam in late 1965. While in Saigon, Kirk flew 180 combat

missions over North Vietnam as a Pilot Systems Operator, taking aerial surveillance photographs. He earned several honors, including the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Before leaving for Vietnam, Kirk proposed to Suzanne and wrote to her every single day he was gone. They were married in 1966.

He and Suzanne moved to Alconbury, England where they welcomed their first daughter, Doria, then returned stateside to Bergstrom AFB in Austin, Texas. In Austin, Kirk performed functional check flights, pushing planes to their limits. He flew Mach 2 one hundred times and his top speed was 1,595 miles per hour. Equally exciting, no doubt, Kirk and Suzanne welcomed their youngest, Alana, while in Austin.

His career then took him to Langley AFB where he served at HQ Tactical Air Command, focusing on redesigning pilot training. He held additional duty as an Advance Agent for Air Force One. Kirk worked 37 "events" for three presidents as an advance agent. In 1978, Kirk was assigned to Kalkar, Germany with the NATO Operations Support Cell/Allied Tactical Operations Center. He and the family stayed in Germany for five years, exploring castles and seeing as much of Europe as possible. Kirk loved German pilsners, keeping an impeccable yard with beds of roses, and the lifelong friends he made in Kalkar.

After 21 years of service, Kirk retired from the Air Force and settled down in Hopkins, Minnesota. Always an innovator, he had purchased one of the first home computers available a few years earlier and learned how to use it. His next 20 years of work was in the computer industry, installing Local Area Networks and earning certifications few could lay claim to. At the age of 63, for a brief but joyous six weeks, Kirk worked as a trainman on the Union Pacific railroad. He continued to watch trains in Hopkins almost every day for the next 20 years.

When he retired from working in 2004, Kirk started volunteering at the MN Air Guard Museum. He was passionate about preserving the history of airplanes and the Air Force and sharing that knowledge with anyone with whom he

crossed paths. Kirk catalogued the museum inventory (this man LOVED a database), served as a docent giving tours, and donned his flight suit for weekends when visitors climbed into the cockpit of an RF-4C that he once flew.

Never one to rest on his proverbial laurels, Kirk started running longer distances in 2011. His running career started in 1971 when Alana was born, but he never ran more than 5 miles until he decided to take on 26.2 miles. At 70 he started his first marathon, dropping at the halfway mark. Not giving up, the next year Kirk finished the full race at the Medtronic Twin Cities Marathon. He went on to run other races, toeing the start line of the Twin Cities 10 Mile many times with Alana. Only three years ago, he finished his last race - the Air Force Half Marathon - under the wings of the airplanes at the Air Force Museum in Dayton, Ohio.

Kirk and Suzanne were married for 59 years. He always wanted daughters to raise and was smitten by Doria and Alana. There was never a moment when they did not know how loved they were. Kirk was equally delighted by his five granddaughters - Madoka, Kyrie, Midori, Grae and Kai.

While Kirk died from complications due to Alzheimer's, that is not how his life was defined. Suzanne would like to thank the staff at Minneapolis Veterans Home and the Vets' Club for their love and dedication in taking care of Kirk. A celebration of his life will be held at 6 p.m. on Saturday, May 30 at Nokomis Heights Lutheran Church in Minneapolis. Visitation one hour prior. There will be an ice cream social to follow as a nod to his love of chocolate sundaes. The family requests bright colors be worn and laughter be shared. In lieu of flowers, donations in his memory can be made to the Minnesota National Guard Air Museum or Nokomis Heights Lutheran Church.