



Ray Cowden Witter

September 16, 1942 - April 3, 2026

Rear Admiral Ray C. Witter, USN (Ret.), passed away peacefully on April 3, 2026, leaving a life defined by service, intellect and a sparkling sense of humor.

A 1964 graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy (Ninth Company), he earned a Master of Science in Engineering Acoustics from the Naval Postgraduate School. He served aboard BRIDGET (DE-1024) and KOINER (DER-331) during the Vietnam conflict, and as weapons officer aboard BIDDLE (CG-34), followed by a tour at the Special Projects Office of Naval Electronic Systems Command and as executive officer of TALBOT (FFG-4).

His career culminated as program director and vice commander of the Undersea Warfare Directorate at Space and Naval Warfare Systems Command, where he contributed to U.S. efforts that helped ease the Cold War. He retired as the Navy's only flag officer with Integrated Undersea Surveillance System specialist designation and later served on the U.S. Naval Academy Alumni Association Board of Trustees, continuing to shape the next generation of naval leaders.

He cherished the company of allies - French, British, Norwegian, Finnish - bonded by shared duty, strong drinks and a commitment to making the world a safer place for democracy. Whether hashing out strategy or sharing a toast far from home, he thrived on these connections, blending camaraderie with purpose.

After leaving the Navy, he held senior roles at Hughes Aircraft, Raytheon

Corporation and Northrop Grumman before retiring to Minneapolis, MN. There, he immersed himself in community life, church and the performing arts. He tempered intellect with lightness of spirit, often quipping that he was "aging gently, like fine wine." He delighted in winning at bridge, scaling Colorado ski slopes, cooking red sauce and European travel - pursuits fueled by a lifelong curiosity about culture and an unflagging appetite for learning.

A descendant of Elizabeth and Ebenezer Witter, a Revolutionary War soldier, he was the son of Ruth Cowden Witter and Ray Charles Witter, who served in both world wars. He was previously married to Diane Elizabeth Witter and is survived by his wife, Jean Kohlmeyer Witter; his children, Ray Christian Witter and Cathleen Diane Witter; his grandchildren, Catherine Ainsley Witter and Cordelia Elizabeth Witter, and sisters, Mary Belliveau (Jim) and Helen "Punker" Robertson (Charles "Robbie").

A service will be held on April 23 at 12:00 p.m. at Mount Olivet Lutheran Church. His final resting place will be Arlington National Cemetery.

www.Washburn-McReavy.com

Edina Chapel 952-920-3996

Cemetery Details

Arlington National Cemetery

1 Memorial Avenue
Fort Myer, VA 22211

Previous Events

Visitation

APR 23. 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM (CT)

Mount Olivet Lutheran Church (So. Mpls)
5025 Knox Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55419

Funeral Service

APR 23. 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM (CT)

Mount Olivet Lutheran Church (So. Mpls)
5025 Knox Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55419

Tribute Wall

US

“ *USNA Class 1964, 9th Company Shipmates purchased the Sacred Duty Spray for the family of Ray Cowden Witter.*



USNA Class 1964, 9th Company Shipmates - April 20 at 10:32 AM

MM

“ *I am saddened to learn of Ray's passing. Please accept my sincere condolences. Ray was a mentor to me during the years I worked for him at NAVELEX / SPAWAR. As the old faded sign that hung in back of his desk said, Ray led, we followed, and anyone opposed to the success of any of his programs got out of the way.*
Mike Nelson, PME 124-43

Mike Melson - April 19 at 08:13 AM



“ *A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Ray Cowden Witter.*

April 18 at 10:05 AM



“ *Serene Retreat was purchased for the family of Ray Cowden Witter.*



April 18 at 10:05 AM

LW

“ *May Ray's soul rest in God's hands for eternity. Len Wass, Captain, USN Ret., USNA '64 (Ray's classmate).*

Leonard Wass - April 10 at 02:42 PM