



William George Burker

February 8, 1924 - July 24, 2016

America has lost another of its “greatest generation”. William Burker passed away peacefully on Sunday morning, July 24, 2016 at the age of 92 at the Lower Cape Fear Hospice and Life Care Center in Wilmington, North Carolina. He was a loving and much loved husband, father, grandfather, great-grandfather, brother, uncle and friend to so many who have been lucky enough to know him.

Bill was born on February 8, 1924 and grew up in northern New Jersey. He went straight from high school to the US Navy in the early months of World War II. For the next two and a half years his home was an LCI landing craft in the South Pacific.

After returning from the war he was united in marriage with Jean Powell, which would become an earthly union of more than 70 years. They made their home in Glen Ridge, New Jersey before moving to Bloomfield and then back to Glen Ridge to raise their three children - Mimi, Kathy, and Bill/Ken (he was known as Ken as a child because Bill never wanted him to be called Billy or “Junior”, but Ken took the name Bill as a grown-up).

Bill spent most of his working years with a company named Wrapaid Machine Company. Owned and run by his brother-in-law Alvin Powell, Wrapaid was a recognized innovator in the packaging business. Bill’s outgoing and delightful personality complimented his skills as an engineer and machinist and he became a successful salesman and travelled widely to oversee the installation of their products all over the world. Perhaps his most memorable assignment

was when Wrapaid became one of the first businesses to go into China when trade with that country resumed in the 1970s.

Outside of work, Bill enjoyed working with wood. But his great love was SCUBA diving. In fact he was one of the pioneers in the sport. He first engaged in the activity during the war when he would go underwater to do repairs on his boat using a gas mask as makeshift (and hazardous) gear. Back in New Jersey he became a recognized and well respected SCUBA instructor and underwater photographer. He earned one of the earliest certifications given using mixed air, something he was justifiably proud of. He enjoyed diving along the east coast, including New Jersey, Florida, Bermuda, Aruba and the Caribbean. He would go on to not only teach his own children to dive but his grandchildren as well. He reluctantly gave up the last of his gear when he turned 80. In his retirement years he took up tennis and returned to table tennis. Not unexpectedly, he excelled at both.

Bill and Jean left Glen Ridge in the early 1990s to spend their retirement years in Wilmington. They've enjoyed their time here, making many more new friends. At the age of 91, Jean still teaches dancing at the area's senior center.

In addition to wonderful memories, Bill leaves behind his lovely wife Jean; daughters Mimi of Los Angeles, CA and Kathy Kwasniewski (and husband William) of West Winfield, and son Bill (Ken and wife Charloa) of Livermore, CA; grandchildren Spirit Gebbia of Pensacola, FL, Woods (and wife Jennifer) Gebbia of Charlotte, NC and Fran (and husband Jude) Seymour of Watertown, NY. He also had the great pleasure of getting to know and spend time with his great-grandchildren, Willow and Collin of Charlotte, and Grady and Emerson of Watertown. His sister Lois still resides in Glen Ridge with husband Phillip Showell and his sister-in-law Dorothy Plue in Fort Worth, TX. Many nieces and nephews have fond memories of their uncle as well as his many, many friends. Bill's brother Ken, and brothers-in-law Alvin Powell and Nelson Plue preceded him through heaven's gates.

It was Bill's wish to be cremated, to have no funeral or service, and to have his

ashes interred in the Garden of Memory at the Glen Ridge Congregational Church in Glen Ridge, New Jersey. If you would like to make a donation in his memory, please consider the Lower Cape Fear Hospice and Life Care Center or the Glen Ridge Congregational Church.

Lower Cape Fear Hospice and Life Care Center

1414 Physicians Drive,

Wilmington, North Carolina 28401

The web link to donate is

<https://lcfhospicefoundation3233.thankyou4caring.org>

Glen Ridge Congregational Church

195 Ridgewood Avenue

Glen Ridge, NJ 07028

Tribute Wall

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“ *Bill was such a lovely man. I am so sorry for your loss, I will be thinking of you all in this sad time.* ”

Tegan Gaudet - August 02, 2016 at 08:55 PM

KB

“ *What a great example Bill was and what a tremendous loss to the family. He was a treasure and we loved him deeply. May he rest in peace.* ”

Ken and Charloa Burker - August 01, 2016 at 10:22 AM