

JAMES G. ZOWARKA (1924 - 2014)

ZOWARKA, JAMES G., 89

Keystone Heights - **James Gilbert Zowarka**, 89, died peacefully on February 18, 2014 at his home in Keystone Heights, Florida after complications from Parkinson's disease. Jim was born in Runge, Texas on May 26, 1924, the son of Gilbert and Ruth Forehand Zowarka. After graduating from Runge High School in 1942 he went on to the University of Texas, playing the trumpet in the marching band, after which he joined the Navy and received his wings to become a Naval Aviator in 1945.

He was stationed in many places, most notably in Greenland, Iceland, Guam and Malta flying the Douglas R5D and the P2V Neptune for squadrons VP-3 and V6. Jim flew sorties as part of the great aviation history made during the Berlin Airlift, where he was counted among the "Raisin Bombers," an endearment for American pilots delivering food, fuel and supplies to our German allies during World War II. His squadron the V6, along with the V8 flew thousands of sorties in what they fondly called "Ten Tons to Templehof," with planes averaging 13 hours flight time daily and consistently operating over 125% efficiency. He was particularly proud of the V6 and V8 squadron's instrument flying ability, competing with other branches of the military to be superior at landing in German's tough, wintery fog conditions.

He met and married Bettye Ruth Luck in 1955 at the Naval Air Station in Jacksonville, Florida. After serving in the Navy for 24 years, Lieutenant Commander Zowarka retired at the Naval Station Norfolk in Virginia in 1966 and moved to Keystone Heights, Florida. He worked at the University of Florida in Gainesville for 37 years and was an avid Florida Gator football fan, cheering on the Gators and enjoying season tickets for over 48 years.

Jim was involved in his community serving in the Keystone Heights Volunteer Fire Department from 1969 to 1975 and was Fire Chief from 1975 to 1983, working to bring the first ambulances and trained EMT volunteers to the area. He was a lifetime member of the Lions Club of America, a member of Keystone Golf and Country Club for over 40 years, a member of the vestry at St. Anne's Episcopal Church in Keystone Heights and later transitioned with the congregation to Trinity Episcopal Church in Melrose. He enjoyed electric trains, aviation history, playing golf, boating and being outdoors.

Jim will be missed by his loving wife of 58 years, Bettye Ruth Luck, his children Chris (Jennifer), Patricia Ganey (Tim), Suzanne Van Hatten, Michael (Tricia), ten grandchildren (Alpha, Nova, Milisa, Margaret, Benjamin, Camille, Alexandra, Michael, Sara, Jackson) and four great-grandchildren (Jonah, Shannon, Chloe, Zackery).

A memorial service and celebration of his life will be held March 22, 2014 at Trinity Episcopal Church, 204 SR 26, Melrose, Florida at 2 pm. In lieu of flowers, the family asks that donations be made to Haven Hospice in Palatka at 6400 St. Johns Avenue, Palatka, FL 32177 or to Trinity Episcopal Church, P.O. Box 361, Melrose, FL 32666.



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