



Lt. Colonel George Robert Cockle

July 29, 1929 - January 25, 2019

Retired Army Lt. Colonel George R. Cockle, 89, passed away on January 25th at Big Bend Hospice House in Tallahassee. A celebration of his life will be held at 3pm on Saturday, February 9th at the Chapel of Christ Presbyterian Church, 2317 Bannerman Road in Tallahassee. A graveside ceremony at Tallahassee National Cemetery will be held at a later date. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Christ Presbyterian Church or the Leon County Humane Society.

Born in Colon, Republic of Panama, George enjoyed an enviable childhood. He was active in high school sports and participated in track and water polo at the 1947 Pan-American Olympics. He attained the rank of Eagle Scout in the Boy Scouts and represented the Canal youth during General Eisenhower's visit to Panama, presenting him with a swagger stick. In 1947 the Panama Canal Governor awarded George a meritorious achievement gold medal for his contributions.

Knowing he wanted a military career, after high school George enlisted in the Army Air Corps at Albrook Field, CZ and was assigned as an airborne radio operator to the 91st Reconnaissance Squadron which was photo mapping Central and South American countries. He decided to apply for a commission when his enlistment ended and was selected to attend the Army General School's Officer Candidate School at Fort Riley, KS, where he received his commission in 1951. After a two year assignment to Alaska, he was chosen for various flight and leadership schools, was an aviation officer at Ft. Devens,

MA, and then spent 3 years in Poitiers, France flying critical parts to depots in Germany. There he qualified as a senior aviator and upon returning to the states, he qualified to fly helicopters. Having multiple tours in Alaska, trained in arctic warfare, and a senior aviator qualified on floats and skis, George was selected to advise the 2nd Scout Battalion, Alaska National Guard, Bethel, AK, comprising some 30 village units on the tundra. It was a tour he especially enjoyed as he had his "own" plane. After a tour in California and then another in Texas as a helicopter flight instructor, he found himself in Viet Nam yet again where he had already spent two tours. On this tour he, as the acting brigade commander, brought over the 1st Brigade, 9th Infantry Division and for the remainder of the tour, flew helicopters in combat. In his 22 year career, he received numerous service, theater, and commendation awards including 2 Distinguished Flying Crosses, 21 air medals with "V", 2 Bronze Stars with "V", Master Army Aviator wings and the Combat Infantry Badge.

Upon retirement, George graduated from the University of Nebraska-Omaha and decided to remain in Omaha. Being an avid photographer, he started filming trains and military aircraft. He ultimately published a total of 21 books covering mid-west railroads and aircraft that frequented Offutt AFB, NE. He processed in excess of 365,000 b/w negatives and his efforts appear in many publications. During ten years of this time, he also worked as a research specialist in Union Pacific Railroad's public relations department.

He is a member of Christ Presbyterian Church, a life member of VFW Post 1, the American Legion, the Military Officers Association, Panama Canal Society of Florida, Carson Long Military Alumni Association, Union Pacific Historical Society, and the F4 Phantom Society. He was preceded in death by his parents, George Dean Cockle and Caroline Elizabeth Cockle, his first wife, Mary June Smalley Cockle and his son, John Robert Cockle, and his second wife, Roberta Watts Cockle. He is survived by his brother, Dale Sherwood Cockle (wife Betty) of Georgetown, TX, several nieces and nephews, and his long-time partner, Lois Calloway and her family who all love him dearly.

In spite of some personal tragedies and setbacks, George often said that he

was able most of his life to do what he loved best and had few regrets. He was indeed comfortable in his own skin and will be sorely missed by many. When you see a train go by, think of George.

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

FEB 9. 3:00 PM (ET)

Christ Presbyterian Church
2317 Bannerman Road
Tallahassee, FL 32312

Tribute Wall

JM

“ I knew George for almost thirty years, sharing our mutual interest in trains, railroads, and railroad photography. He was literally a walking encyclopedia on the topic of military aviation and railroads, especially the Union Pacific. He always encouraged me to do my best at whatever I did. He was a great friend, and I am really sorry that I never got to meet him face-to-face in all those years. I have a number of his books in my library, and they always bring me enjoyment whenever I pick one up to reread. Thank you for being a friend, George. God bless you and your family.

Jeffrey M. Morfit - February 01, 2019 at 09:05 AM

KR

“ I worked for then MAJ Cockle at Ft. Wolters, TX during the Viet Nam war. As aviators we both made several trips to that war torn country. His brother and I are West Point classmates. He treated me with respect and dignity during our tour of duty at Ft. Wolters. Kyle Rector

Kyle Rector - January 30, 2019 at 09:57 PM

TV

“ Glad to have known George. He was approachable and nurturing.

Tim Vana/Omaha, NE

Timothy Vana - January 29, 2019 at 05:24 PM

Tim
Kaufman

“ With me, George seemed to know no limits of sharing his time and talents. Easily one of the people who was very kind and shared his talents -- and our interest in U.P. locomotives. Extraordinary talent, extraordinary friend. Thank you, George, for being one of the most influential people at an early period in my life.

Tim Kaufman - January 28, 2019 at 11:59 PM

DR

“ D.J. Zimmerman CWO USA retired purchased the Florist Choice Bouquet for the family of Lt. Colonel George Robert Cockle.



D.J. Zimmerman CWO USA retired - January 28, 2019 at 10:28 PM

MT

“ I have been an avid railroad fan since I was able to know what trains were and back in the 1970s and 80s, I discovered the photography of George R Cockle. I was TOTALLY absorbed with whatever George put in print. My favorite book of his; "Giants of the West" covered my favorite subjects, big motive power of the Union Pacific Railroad in minute detail with seemingly endless pictures of Turbines and BIG diesel power. A copy of it is STILL on my book shelf at home. I got a chance to talk to George over the phone many times about Union Pacific and life in general. I got to meet him once, only once in Omaha and had dinner with him. I had NO IDEA of his professional military career but knew he loved the F4 "Phantom" jet and was well versed in all things military. I thought it was just another hobby for him and he had worked for the railroad all his life. We corresponded for a while but after he moved to Florida, we lost touch. I got a Christmas card from him in December of 2017 but never got around to writing him back. One act of neglect I will ponder on for a while. I thought George was a little bigger than life when I met him. He seemed to know everything about all the things that interested me. I will never forget having dinner with him. I was saddened on the hearing of his passing. I wish his family well. George was a great guy.

Mark Tweeddale - January 28, 2019 at 04:58 PM

'B

What a wonderful life he made for himself. Go with God George, he needs a good co-pilot. 'Bic' Bickerton ~ Past President of the 18th & 54th Aviation Co. 'Otternest' Association.

'Bic' Bickerton - February 01, 2019 at 10:31 AM