

Norman Robert Byrd

March 10, 1921 – June 3, 2019



You will not see the sun rise in the east again, nor will you see the moon in all its brightness in the night sky, nor feel the wind on your face nor the earth beneath your bare feet. Today you are going home. May the ancestors greet you and show you the way. May your journey be joyful.

(Arapaho prayer, credit Margaret Coel)

Norman Robert Byrd was born in the Bronx, New York on March 21, 1921, the older son of Rose Nussbaum and Philip Vogel. He enlisted in the Army in 1943 and served with the 13th Armored Division, part of Patton's Third Army. His unit entered France in mid-winter 1945, traveling across France on an armored half-track vehicle, then into Germany and on into Austria. He often told of visiting Hitler's Bavarian hide-away, the "Eagle's Nest." After returning to the U.S., he was stationed in California. With thousands of others, he was scheduled to be landed in Japan during a major assault, where 85% casualties were expected – the atomic bombs surely saved his life.

After the war, he married Emily Wieselthier, "Emmy Lou", in 1950. They were married for 42 years, until her death in 1992. Norm and Emmy Lou were the proud parents of one daughter, Lauri Ann, and one son, Geoffrey Norman. In the early 1970's the family moved to a new home in Villa Park, CA, where Norm lived the rest of his life.

Norm was eager for higher education and originally wanted to be an astronomer, but there were no astronomy degrees offered that he could afford. Instead, he spent more than 10 years at the Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn, mostly in night school, earning a

Ph.D. in Chemistry (1955). He held a series of positions as a research chemist with E.I. du Pont, Goodyear Tire, Rayonier, Inc., National Starch and Chemical, and Ford Aeronutronics before beginning what would be a 42-year tenure at McDonnell Douglas / Boeing. He was elected an MDC Fellow in 1984, a position he held until his retirement.

Norman Byrd's work was well recognized in the chemistry of materials. Among his many accomplishments are the development of a gas detector for ultimate use in a manned Voyager to Mars. He worked extensively in the development of fire-resistant composites and with specialized coatings for minimizing adhesion of ice or chemical warfare agents to aircraft surfaces. He holds 45 patents and authored more than 29 publications. He retired – not willingly! – from Boeing at the age of 88 but continued to work with a partnership in developing a commercial ice adhesion product.

In 1995 Norm married Chris Margileth. They were fortunate to spend almost 23 years together, enjoying many shared interests and friends far and wide.

In recent years Norm's wide-ranging interests included Southwestern Native American art, photography and birding. He could always be found wearing one of his collection of bolo ties, several of which were included in museum exhibits. Habitat conservation for wildlife, the changing climate, and the urgent need to reduce plastic waste were his most recent passions.

In late May 2019, Norm fell at home and suffered severe injuries. He passed away on June 3. He is survived by his wife Chris; daughter Lauri Turner and son-in-law Jeff Turner; son Geoffrey Byrd, daughter-in-law Cindy and grandson Elijah; Chris's son Jeff Margileth and grandchildren Jasmine, Jade and Peter; and Chris's daughter JoAnna Margileth and son-in-law Mike Parnham, and grandchildren Matthew, David, Sevann and Tyler. Interment will be private, with a celebration of Norm's life to be held at a later date.

In lieu of flowers, the family would appreciate donations in Norm's memory to one of the following:

- Sea and Sage Audubon Society, P.O. Box 5447, Irvine, CA 92616 (with a notation that yours is a memorial gift in honor of Norman Byrd)
- The Tech Trek project of AAUW Tustin/Santa Ana/Orange Branch which fosters science and technology in middle school girls (AAUW – American Association of University Women). Make your check payable to "AAUW-CA-SPF" with "Tech Trek/Dr. Norman Byrd" on the memo line, and mail to AAUW Tech Trek, 1602 S.E. Skyline Drive, Santa Ana, CA 92705