

Obituary

George T. Cooper, Beverly Hills

George T. Cooper, age 89, died peacefully in his sleep at his home Tuesday, June 30, 2020, of natural causes. Mr. Cooper was born in North Bergen, N.J., and raised in West New York, N.J. He was the son of the late George W. Cooper, a native of London, England, and Margaret (Gilsdorf) Cooper. As a boy, he was keenly interested in scouting and rose to the rank of Eagle Scout. He continued as an Explorer scout and assisted with scout troops on until his early 20s. He enlisted in the Navy Reserve while still a student at Memorial High School in West New York and following graduation he made the Navy a career.



Mr. Cooper began his Navy career as a Gunner's Mate striker aboard the U.S.S. Seagull (AMS-55), but soon switched to the supply field. He served as a Storekeeper on shore stations and ships to include the Navy detachment at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, King's Point, New York; the U.S.S. Snyder (DE-745); the U.S.S. Elokomin (AO-55) (on which vessel he was promoted to Chief Petty Officer); and the U.S.S. Tidewater (AD-31). His outstanding service as an enlisted man led to his being commissioned as an officer in December 1963. Following graduation from the U.S. Navy Supply Corps School in August 1964, he served as the Commissary Officer aboard the U.S.S. Guam (LPH-9); on the Supply Staff of LST Division 41 in Little Creek, VA; and on the staff of Supervisor Shipbuilding, Conversion, and Repair (SUPSHIP), Newport News, VA. While at SUPSHIP, he volunteered to travel with a team of technicians to evaluate repairs made by Newport News Shipyard to the U.S.S. Enterprise (CVN-65), then conducting combat operations off the coast of Vietnam. The expertise he gained in the logistics of shipbuilding and repair at SUPSHIP led to his being assigned as the U.S. Navy representative on site at Brooke Marine, Ltd. shipyard of Lowestoft, England; Brooke Marine was then building three salvage tugs for the U.S. Navy. On his return to the U.S., he embarked upon his final Navy assignment as a member of the staff of Naval Inshore Warfare Command, Atlantic. In this position, he helped plan the clearing of the Suez Canal following the Yom Kippur War. Mr. Cooper retired from the Navy in August 1974 after 27 years of service with the rank of Lieutenant Commander. Among Mr. Cooper's decorations and awards were two awards of the Navy Commendation Medal: one for his service at SUPSHIP and one for his service at Brooke Marine Shipyard.

Toward the end of his Navy career, Mr. Cooper began taking night and correspondence courses and earned an associate's degree from the State College of New York in 1973 and a bachelor's degree from Saint Leo College in 1974.

Upon his retirement from the Navy, Mr. Cooper moved to Inverness where he served as a parole and probation officer for the state of Florida and as an assistant to Citrus County Judge Leonard Damron. Mr. Cooper left the area in 1976 to begin a new career as a logistics analyst, primarily supporting the U.S. Navy. He worked for various Government contractors in the Washington, D.C. area; Orlando; and Tampa to include Syscon, Northrup Services, and Lockheed. He also worked briefly as a Government employee in Norfolk, VA. As he neared his final retirement, Mr. Cooper became interested in economic development in Florida, and he led the offices of economic development in Holmes and Washington

Counties out of his home base in Panama City before returning to Citrus County in 1992 to head the Citrus County Office of Economic Development. He was particularly interested in development opportunities that would provide employment for veterans. His success in these endeavors led to his being cited in the Wall Street Journal, The Florida Business Trend Magazine, and local newspapers for procuring millions of dollars in Federal contracts for small businesses. He also worked closely with Jay Conti, the past post Commander of American Legion Post 155 in Crystal River, to promote veteran's issues in general and received recognition from the American Legion at the national level for his efforts.

Mr. Cooper married Norma M. NeeSmith of Toombs County, GA in 1957; from this marriage Mr. Cooper had six children: Nancy Cooper Dozier (Keith); Thomas (Arlene); Susan Cooper Cloutier (Craig); Charles (Rena); Janice Cooper McLaughlin (James); and James. Following Mrs. Cooper's death, Mr. Cooper married Debra Jean Mitchell of Winter Park, and they were the parents of Austin and Ashley Cooper. Mr. Cooper is survived by his widow Debra of Beverly Hills, his brother Warren T. Cooper of Groton, CT, his 8 children, 13 grandchildren, and 6 great-grandchildren. He was predeceased in 1995 by a grandson, Jeffrey Allen Dozier.

Mr. Cooper was a lifelong member of the Catholic faith. His loves were his family and the U.S. Navy. Mr. Cooper was a huge presence in the lives of his family and friends, and he will be sorely missed by all.

Family will receive friends from 9AM-10AM, Friday, July 3, 2020 with military honors beginning at 10AM at Brown Funeral Home & Crematory in Lecanto. A private burial will follow at Florida National Cemetery, Bushnell.

The family would like to thank VITAS Healthcare for the first-class care they gave Mr. Cooper in his final days. In lieu of flowers, please consider making a donation to VITAS Community Connection <https://vitascommunityconnection.org/>.