



Frank Morgan Speer, Jr.

October 2, 1945 - November 27, 2023

Frank Morgan Speer, Jr., 78, of Asheville, North Carolina, passed away peacefully on November 27, 2023, surrounded by three generations of family.

Our dad, affectionately known as Frank, Frankie, Franker, Daddy, Dad, Pappy, Paps, and Papo had a rich and full life with family at its center.

Frank was born on October 2, 1945, to parents Frank & Leota Speer in Holdenville, OK, near his family's farm in Hughes County. Soon after his birth, his family, including his older sister Norma, moved to Tulsa. Frank spent his childhood in a close-knit neighborhood where he met lifelong friends, including his wife of 52 years, Mary Frances Knecht Speer. Frank attended Central High School in the early '60s and was eventually recruited to the US Navy, where he served as a medic during the Vietnam War. When Frank returned home from the service, he reunited with his childhood friend and soon-to-be sweetheart, Mary Knecht. They married and have been inseparable since.

Frank and Mary had an amazing love story that included their four children, oldest daughter Joy Elizabeth Hicks, son Charles O. Speer, second eldest daughter Julie Gloe Speer and youngest daughter Jenny Lyn Taylor. In the '70s & '80s, they lived in the Tulsa area where Frank was a Deputy Sheriff, and Mary was a Registered Nurse. Since they had so much extra time while raising their four children and working two full-time jobs, they decided to add

running a working horse farm to their list of responsibilities. Frank and Mary specialized in breeding and raising highly sought-after Appaloosa racehorses and were active in the Tulsa racehorse community.

Frank and his family eventually sold the farm and moved back to Hughes County for a period of time, where Frank applied his military experience and skills working security on a local military base. He and Mary also started a rural ambulance service there. They used their healthcare experience to bring emergency services to their local community.

Frank and his family eventually moved back to Tulsa, where he worked at the Tulsa Health Department during the AIDS epidemic. Frank championed the rights of AIDS patients and lobbied for change in the healthcare system. Frank eventually moved on from healthcare to follow his passion for classic cars. In 1987, he started Speer Classic Restorations, a restoration and upholstery business inspired by the passion he found working in his teens at Auburn, Cord & Duesenberg, where he apprenticed in upholstery and where he fell in love with all things automotive. He used that experience and passion to create a thriving business restoring unique classic cars and returning them to their former glory.

In the early '90s, Frank encouraged Mary to continue growing her career in healthcare management. Frank relocated his business to Raleigh, North Carolina, to support her, concentrating on upholstery for commercial, marine, and general automotive vehicles. Frank and Mary loved living in a small town, so they eventually settled in the Benson, Dunn & Erwin area, where they lived for almost 20 years. Frank and Mary were very involved at Saint Stephen's Episcopal Church in Erwin, NC, serving as church officers. Frank eventually became a licensed real estate broker and helped families find affordable housing in Harnett & Johnston Counties.

In 2016, Frank and Mary moved to Raleigh, where they lived with their daughter Julie and her wife Jennifer and minutes from Jenny and her family. Beth followed in Dad's Navy footsteps and became an officer in the Navy and eventually traveled and lived all over the world. Charles and his family lived within an hour from Raleigh, so Frank was consistently surrounded by his children and growing family, adding grandchildren and great-grandchildren throughout the years. They ultimately retired to Asheville, NC, where he and Mary lived out their final days. Mary passed away on December 10, 2022. They were married for 52 years.

If you knew Frank, you knew Mary. Until this year, they never spent an anniversary apart. They completed each other in a way that few are ever privileged. Speaking of Frank, if you haven't figured it out by now, he was never settled – he had an immense passion for learning, ever-evolving, and never still, mentally or physically! There wasn't anything he couldn't do - mechanics, science, mathematics, entrepreneurship, building, service, security, tinkering, gardening, canning, and pontificating - his talents and knowledge were limitless, as was his love for life. Humor was a big part of who he was; he had the best and worst dad jokes. He always brought laughter and a silliness to every event or conversation. His humor helped bring joy and healing even in the hardest of times. One of his favorite family rituals was family game night, in which he was known to “bend the rules,” and somehow, he always won.

Frank spent most of his retirement caring for Mary, who had Alzheimer's, but a true lover of all things vintage, he spent days with Mary, watching classic movies, listening to '50s & '60s music, and tinkering with vintage radios and audio amps. One of his favorite movies was *The Maltese Falcon* – and if Dad were here to describe his life, we are pretty sure it would be with the famous line from that movie: “The stuff that dreams are made of.”

Rest in peace, Papo!

Preceded by Mary in 2022, Frank is survived by his children, Beth Hicks, Charles Speer, Julie Speer, and Jenny Taylor, grandchildren Heather, Ashton, Cameron, Jon, Lauren, Bonnie, and Owen, and great-grandchildren Eli, Josephine, Dante, Corvus, Alexander, and Lucas.

The family requests that all flowers and notes be sent to 11305 Ridgegate Drive, Raleigh, NC 27617. There will be a celebration of life ceremony and reception on Saturday, Dec 9, 2023, at 5:00 pm. To RSVP, email julies990@gmail.com

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

DEC 9. 5:00 PM (ET)

FAMILY HOME

11305 Ridgeway Drive

Raleigh, NC 27617

(919) 210-4672

To RSVP, email julies990@gmail.com

Tribute Wall



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Frank Morgan Speer, Jr..*



December 01, 2023 at 07:05 PM



“ *Cousin Frankie did some great upholstery work on my racing car in the 70's. Red rolled naugahyde. He will be missed. M Dunn Tulsa*

Michael Dunn - December 01, 2023 at 12:06 PM



Thank you so much for sharing your memory.

Jenny Taylor - December 04, 2023 at 10:41 AM



“ *Beautiful Heart Bouquet was purchased for the family of Frank Morgan Speer, Jr..*



November 30, 2023 at 09:41 PM