

In Remembrance

Captain Rosemary Bryant Mariner, U.S. Navy (Retired)

adapted with permission from the announcement provided by the Holley Gamble Funeral Home, Clinton TN; photos courtesy of the Mariner family

Captain Rosemary Mariner, U.S. Navy (Retired) died on January 24, 2019, in the fifth year of her battle with ovarian cancer, with her husband and wingman of 40 years, Tommy, by her side. She was 65. Born in Harlingen, Texas and raised in San Diego, she graduated from Purdue University with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Aeronautics at age 19.

Captain Mariner was one of the first eight women selected to fly military aircraft in 1973. After flight training in 1974, she became the Navy's first female jet pilot, flying the A-4C and the A-7E Corsair II. She moved to the Naval Weapons Center in China Lake, and served with Air Test and Evaluation Squadron 5 (VX-5). For sea duty, in 1982 she reported aboard USS Lexington (CVT-16), where she qualified as a Surface Warfare Officer.

In 1990, she became the first woman to command a military aviation squadron, VAQ-34, based at the Pacific



Commanding Officer of VAQ-34 in cockpit of A-7 Corsair II



Conducting preflight inspection as flight student

Missile Test Center at Pt. Mugu, CA. She attended the National War College in Washington, DC, earning a Masters in National Security Strategy, and served on the Staff of the Joint Chiefs in the Pentagon. Her final military assignment was as the Chairman of the Joint Chief's Chair in Military Strategy at the National War College, before retiring in 1997. Throughout her career, Captain Mariner was both willing to serve as a mentor to others, and deeply grateful to the men and women who enabled her to pursue her dreams. She was instrumental in the repeal of restrictions on women serving in combat.

In retirement, Captain Mariner was a resident scholar at the Center for the Study of War and Society at the University of Tennessee in the

History Department where she taught classes in military history, emphasizing the intersections of war and conscience. She continued to serve as an advisor on national defense policy and women's integration into the military for ABC News, PBS and the Department of the Navy. A voracious reader and an eager academic, she devoted herself to a love of knowledge. She lived in Norris, Tennessee, with her husband, retired Navy Commander Tommy Mariner, and their daughter, Emmalee, who attends Duke University.

The family received friends on Saturday, February 2, 2019, for a funeral service at Norris United Methodist Church, and a funeral mass was held at St. Joseph's Catholic Church, followed by full military graveside service at New Loyston Cemetery.



A distinguished group of female aviators gathered at the memorial services for CAPT Rosemary Mariner to commemorate her legacy and to pay their respects. L-R Standing: Carey Lohrenz, Peggy Carnahan, Eileen Isola, Marcy Atwood, Lucy Young, Chris Giza, Mary Louise Griffin, Lee Hansen, Judy Bruner, Joellen Oslund
L-R Seated: Barb Garwood, Margie Varuska, Terry Vandendolder, Tricia Wood, Kay Hire

“We rightly honored pioneer Captain Rosemary Mariner, and by extension, we also honored all our women aviators - past, present and future. Well done Rosemary, the doors you fought to open, are now fully so.”

CAPT Barbara Bell, USN (Ret)

“I met Rosemary in 1975, and soon thereafter she became the first woman aviator to fly Navy jets. She became my mentor and a sounding board for me throughout my 22 year career in the Navy and the Reserves. She was fearless about blazing new trails, which helped all of us who came after her.”

CAPT Lucy B. Young, USNR (Ret)

All-Female Flyover Honors Naval Aviation Pioneer

story by MC3 (SW/AW) Sara L. Eshelman, USN, U.S. Navy photo by MC3 Raymond Maddocks

Honoring the life and legacy of a female pioneer in Naval Aviation, the U.S. Navy conducted the first ever all-female “Missing Man” flyover in Maynardville, TN. The tribute was part of the funeral service for one of the Navy’s first female jet pilots, retired Navy Captain Rosemary Mariner, who passed away Jan. 24 following a long and brave fight with cancer.

The Missing Man Flyover is a special tribute honoring the passage of aviators who have served their country. The maneuver features four aircraft flying above the funeral service in formation. When passing overhead the service, one of the aircraft dramatically pulls up and away from the formation, climbing vertically into the heavens as the remaining formation continues to overfly the ceremony. The maneuver symbolizes the loss of the “wingman” being honored in the service below.

All of the female aviators participating in the flyover were from squadrons based at Naval Air Station (NAS) Oceana and were flying F/A-18E/F “Super Hornets.” The event was the first ever all-female flyover and is

emblematic of the growing role women play in the U.S. Navy and in the U.S. Armed Forces.

The flyover was especially meaningful to LT Emily Rixey, assigned to Strike Fighter Weapons School Atlantic, a participant in the commemoration. “I find it important to honor Captain Mariner and the other female aviators who have come before us,” she said. “They paved the way for us and they’re the reason I’m able to participate in this flyover.”

CDR Leslie Mintz, Executive Officer of Strike Fighter Squadron 213 (VFA-213), expressed similar sentiments. “I’m truly honored and humbled to be a part of this flyover,” Mintz said. “This formation flyover is a great way to honor Captain Mariner’s

memory and what she has done for our community.”

LCDR Paige Blok, a Naval Aviator with VFA-32, echoed her colleagues’ statements: “Honoring a life of service is always a privilege. We’re lucky to honor Captain Mariner in our own special way.”



Back row: LT Christy Talisse, LT Emily Rixey, LCDR Jennifer Hesling, LT Kelly Harris, LT Amanda Lee
Front row: LCDR Danielle Thiriot, CDR Stacy Uttecht, CDR Leslie Mintz, LCDR Paige Blok