

Capt. Frederick Mueller Derr, USNR (Ret.)

April 2, 2025

Capt. Frederick Mueller Derr, USNR (Ret.), 92, passed away peacefully on the morning of April 2, 2025, surrounded by his family. A rare individual with a deep well of resilience and a gift for transforming challenges into opportunities, Fred's life was one of purpose, leadership, and service. He is survived by his wife, Terri Derr; his three daughters, Elizabeth, Katherine, and Charlotte; and his siblings, Jane, Wayne, John, and Lucy. He was preceded in death by his brothers, Steve Derr and Gary Derr.

Fred was born in 1932. His early years were marked by profound change. His father, Ferdinand Earl Mueller, passed away when Fred was only two years old. Four years later, his mother Bernice Yeager Mueller remarried John R. Derr, who adopted Fred and became a guiding force in his life.

The family moved to Fort Lauderdale, Florida in 1940, where Fred graduated from high school in 1950. When his adoptive father took a new position at Palmer Bank in Sarasota, the family relocated there. After high school, Fred initially struggled to find work, despite trying various jobs—from construction with Powell Brothers to bell hopping at the John Ringling Hotel, and later working for Plaza Restaurant, owned by friends of his father.

Realizing he wanted more for his future, Fred set his sights on the United States Naval Academy. Without political connections for a nomination, his

mother introduced him to Eldridge Boyd, a local developer who encouraged him to pursue the opportunity. Fred took the competitive entrance exam—one of 200 applicants vying for a single congressional appointment. Knowing the odds were slim, he didn't wait idly. In 1952, he boarded a train to Navy Boot Camp in San Diego and enlisted as an Electronics Technician Seaman Recruit while awaiting the results. Six weeks into boot camp, a telegram arrived: Representative James Haley had awarded Fred the lone congressional appointment to the Naval Academy. After completing basic training, he was assigned to the Special Services Division until he transferred to the Naval Academy in Annapolis in 1953.

After graduating from the United States Naval Academy, Fred was commissioned into the U.S. Navy Civil Engineer Corps. On the day of his graduation, he married Carol E. Membert, beginning a life together grounded in shared values of education, service, and purpose. He later earned his Bachelor of Civil Engineering from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in 1959.

His distinguished naval career included tours in Southeast Asia, the Maryland Naval Propellant Plant, Tulane University, Morocco, New Jersey, and a master's degree in civil engineering. In 1967, Fred resigned his regular commission to accept a position in the Naval Reserve and joined Wendel Kent's highway construction company, where he found in Wendel Kent a lifelong mentor.

Fred eventually became the majority owner of the company—renamed Frederick Derr and Company in 1991—and a minority owner in Gator Asphalt and Quality Aggregates. Under his leadership, the firm thrived and grew in influence throughout Florida.

In 1988, Fred's brother Wayne introduced him to Terri Elbare Shaw, a fellow marathon runner and Realtor. They had met at races years earlier, and the

connection soon blossomed into a strong partnership. Terri had known Fred's mother and attended school with his sister Lucy Patton. Fred and Terri married and shared 37 vibrant years of travel, running, and community engagement.

Fred had three daughters from his first marriage to Carol—each of whom went on to successful careers. Elizabeth Derr and Dr. Charlotte Derr reside in Tampa, FL, while Katherine Derr lives in Sarasota.

Fred's dedication to his community was unwavering. He served in leadership and philanthropic roles across many organizations: Mote Marine Laboratory (Chairman Emeritus), the Argus Foundation (Executive Committee), the Asphalt Contractors Association of Florida (President), Citizens for a Better Sarasota (Treasurer), Citizens for Better Schools (Co-Founder), Rotary Club of Sarasota, La Musica International Chamber Music Festival (President), Florida Engineering Society, Sarasota Military Academy (Treasurer), and the Seabee Memorial Scholarship Fund.

He was recognized throughout his career for his professional achievements and technical expertise. In 1989, he was named Engineer of the Year by the Florida Engineering Society Myakka Chapter. In 1999, he received the Outstanding Technical Achievement Award from the same chapter for his work on the design and construction of a coastal protection structure on Casey Key. In 2013, Fred received the Argus Foundation Lifetime Achievement Award and was the longest-serving trustee of the Board at Mote Marine Laboratory. Most recently, in 2022, he was honored with the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Gulf Coast Builder's Exchange.

Fred Derr lived a life of service, determination, and compassion. His legacy will live on in the countless lives he touched, the institutions he shaped, and

the family he loved so deeply. In lieu of flowers, contributions in Fred's memory may be made to Mote Marine Laboratory, the Argus Foundation, La Musica International Chamber Music Festival, Sarasota Military Academy, or the Seabee Memorial Scholarship Fund.

A Celebration of life will be held 2 pm, April 25th at Mote Marine Aquarium please visit www.frederickderrlifecelebration.com for more information.

Previous Events

A Celebration of Life

APR **25**. 2:00 PM (ET)

Mote Marine Laboratory & Aquarium
1600 Ken Thompson Parkway
Sarasota, FL 34236

Tribute Wall

PF

“ Pamela F. planted a grove of 3 [Memorial Trees](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Capt. Frederick Mueller Derr, USNR (Ret.).

Pamela F. - April 21, 2025 at 11:53 PM

PF

“ Pamela Fetterman lit a candle in memory of Capt. Frederick Mueller Derr, USNR (Ret.)



Pamela Fetterman - April 21, 2025 at 11:51 PM

TC

“ Tom Clarke purchased the Simply Elegant Spathi phyllum for the family of Capt. Frederick Mueller Derr, USNR (Ret.).



Tom Clarke - April 17, 2025 at 09:32 AM

CT

“ My heart is heavy with the loss of such a kind, generous and outstanding man that our family had the pleasure of knowing and working with for the last 40 +/- years. Fred was always the man you knew he was going to do what he told you he would, you could always count on him. Fred was such a blessing to everyone he came in contact with. Our prayers and thoughts are with you Terri and your family and the Frederick Derr & Company family, may God bless you always. Carol Twyford, Brick Pavers Inc.

Carol Twyford - April 15, 2025 at 11:15 AM

CT

“ Carol Twyford lit a candle in memory of Capt. Frederick Mueller Derr, USNR (Ret.)



Carol Twyford - April 15, 2025 at 11:02 AM

MF

“ Megan Kitchner and the Atlantic family. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Capt. Frederick Mueller Derr, USNR (Ret.).

Megan Kitchner and the Atlantic family. - April 14, 2025 at 12:03 PM

MF

“ Megan Kitchner and the Atlantic family. purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of Capt. Frederick Mueller Derr, USNR (Ret.).



Megan Kitchner and the Atlantic family. - April 14, 2025 at 12:03 PM

LB

“ I'll never forget working for my Uncle Fred one summer running errands and helping around the office. One day he asked me to take his brand new black ford explorer to the car wash. I was excited to drive the new car but also a little nervous (as I just got my drivers license). I took it through the car wash and once through, the guy drying off the car said “there's some paint on the car”. I got out and saw a splatter of white paint all over the side of his new black explorer! I had no idea what I ran into but in a panic went back to the office. When I told him, thinking he'd be upset, he was quite the opposite! He kindly said it's okay and was able to have the guys in his shop remove the paint. I'll never forget his patience, kindness and generosity! That was just his nature. My thoughts and prayers are with you all. ... May you rest in peace now Uncle Fred!

Lisa Butler - April 13, 2025 at 12:34 PM



“ Pretty Please was purchased for the family of Capt. Frederick Mueller Derr, USNR (Ret.).



April 13, 2025 at 12:07 PM

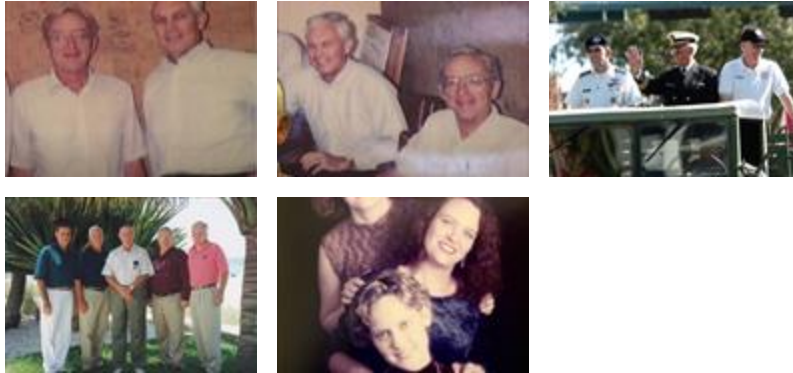


“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Capt. Frederick Mueller Derr, USNR (Ret.).

April 13, 2025 at 12:07 PM

KD

“ 36 files added to the album Fred Derr Trough the Years



Katherine Derr - April 11, 2025 at 03:01 PM

JJ

“ Fred was on the track team at Central High school in Ft Lauderdale and he was also a boy scout attaining the level of assistant scout master. He was a great big brother and helped me along the way. I remember riding with him to deliver newspapers in the early morning hours for the Ft Lauderdale Daily news. When I was just out of Navy ICA school waiting for my ship to return to Boston, I traveled by bus to see him and Carol in Troy NY where his was finishing up his degree in civil engineering.

After the family moved to Sarasota, Fred saved his money from multiple jobs and paid for preparatory schooling to take the Naval Academy entrance exam. I remember his first car which he decided to paint it himself in the garage next to the house. It came out reasonable well.

During his midshipman year at the academy he went to the Mediterranean aboard the USS Des Moines CA134. He brought me back hunting knife and other gifts for the family. While I served on three ships, he served on land. All of his brothers and sisters loved him dearly.

John R Derr JR - April 10, 2025 at 02:46 PM

LJ

“ Lovingly , Jill purchased the Sweet Tranquility Basket for the family of Capt. Frederick Mueller Derr, USNR (Ret.).



Lovingly , Jill - April 10, 2025 at 12:32 PM

LJ

“ Lovingly , Jill planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Capt. Frederick Mueller Derr, USNR (Ret.).

Lovingly , Jill - April 10, 2025 at 12:32 PM