



## **Rip Kirby**

### **1932-2025**

Ryborn (Rip) Ray Kirby, 92, of Houston, Texas passed away peacefully in his Port Bolivar home on Sunday March 23, 2025. He was surrounded by eldest daughter, Brenda Kirby, and his sister-in-law/caregiver, Julie Kirby, at his time of death.

Born in 1932 to Laconia and Rich Ryborn Kirby, he spent his youth in Era, Texas working on the family farm. Rip received his Bachelor of Science in Animal Husbandry from Texas A&M University in 1954. The day after his Aggie graduation, he was drafted to the Korean War and served as Supply Corporal for US Army in Germany. While overseas, he was instrumental in starting up a Sunday on-base church services for their division. Upon his return, Rip pursued a degree in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Oklahoma, graduating in 1959. In a pursuit to never stop learning, he enjoyed several continuing education classes through Auburn.

Rip met Rosemary Dean in Dallas, Texas and they were married on February 24, 1961. The young couple briefly lived in Oklahoma and Colorado before settling their roots back in Texas. Rip played the critical role as Rose's caregiver when she battled Dementia from 2013 – 2020. They were married for 59 years prior to her death on June 29, 2020.

Rip had a remarkable 34-year career at NASA with the Johnson Space Center in Houston, TX. From 1962 to 1972 he was intimately involved in the Launch Site Recovery team for the Gemini and Apollo missions. Rip was the Launch Site Recovery lead for all 14 Apollo missions beginning with the unmanned Apollo 4 (first Saturn 5) in 1967 through Apollo 17 (last lunar landing) in December 1972. In 1967 Rip also took the role of Training Section Head in the Landing and Recovery Division (LRD) Operations Branch.

Following the Apollo era in 1973, Rip moved to the Science & Application Directorate for development of scientific experiments and payloads in the Earth Observation Division. In 1977, he took on the Deputy Chief role for the Science and Payload division. From 1977 – 1988 he served as Division/Systems Development Branch Chief in the Space & Life Science Directorate/Life Science Projects group. Rip retired in 1996 ending his career in the Space Station Program and Data Management & Operations Office.

Outside of his aerospace career, Rip was an active member in the Era, League City and Bolivar Christ of Church communities. He was a key player in helping the obtain the charter and permitting to establish the Church of Christ location in Port Bolivar, TX.

Rip will be remembered for this love of fishing, woodworking, watching A&M football games and spending time at his Port Bolivar house. He was a positive soul, full of humor, very positive, loving and proud of his family. Rip was a beloved husband, father, grandfather, co-worker and friend to those who knew him. He is survived by his daughter Brenda Kirby, daughter Kristina Kirby and her husband, Robert Higgins; 5 grandchildren and numerous friends.

In lieu of a funeral, an online memorial has been created. Condolences may also be sent to the family at: [kristinikirbyphotography@gmail.com](mailto:kristinikirbyphotography@gmail.com) or 512-589-6326 (Kristina).