

Richard Aris McIntosh

'75 Gone But Not Forgotten

Richard Aris McIntosh, Colonel, USAF (Ret.) passed away at his home in Lakeside, Ore. on Aug. 13, 2017. Known to most as "Mac" he leaves behind a lasting impact on his nation, community and family.

Born on March 24, 1953, in Ashiya, Japan, the son of Master Sgt. Gale McIntosh, USAF (Ret) and Mrs. Sachiko (Uchida) McIntosh. When his father retired from a 23-year Air Force career in 1968, the family relocated to Coos Bay, Ore. He graduated from Marshfield High School in 1971 as the co-valedictorian and state champion hurdler.

Mac graduated from the U.S. Air Force Academy in 1975 as an All-American and captain of the track & field team, and anchored a world and American record-setting 240-yard shuttle hurdle relay team. Following graduation, he married Linnea Wright, his high-school sweetheart, and then completed a master's degree in history from Indiana University in 1976.

Fighter aviation and command provided anchors for a 30-year career as an Air Force officer. He flew F-15 Eagles through skies over Arizona, Nevada, Florida, Virginia, Saudi Arabia and Hawaii.

Mac retired in 2005, and returned home to the Coos Bay, Ore. area - the last of 14 moves around the world. He and Linnea worked side by side to build their dream home on Lakeside, Ore., while Mac integrated into the community as a member of the local Rotary club and as head track & field coach for Marshfield High. At Marshfield, he built a world-class program around one team rule "Never let your teammates down" and three standards for excellence: Live with Integrity, Compete with Class, and Add to the Legacy.

In 2015, Mac was diagnosed with Stage IV pancreatic cancer. He was given a one percent chance he would survive longer than five months. Mac fought his diagnosis for two years before the disease took his life. Of course no one was surprised that he was able to fight as long as he was. Whatever you knew Mac McIntosh to be, you also knew he was far from ordinary.

Mac McIntosh was more than the high school valedictorian, track coach, or cancer patient. Mac McIntosh was my dad, and the greatest fighter pilot in the world. How do I know he was the greatest? He told me so.

Being raised by a fighter pilot isn't the same as being raised by any other mortal man. Being raised by a fighter pilot is like being raised by Zeus himself. Do you know the difference between a fairy tale and a fighter pilot's story? A fairy tale begins "Once upon a time," a fighter pilot's story begins "No sh--, this really happened."

My dad could break an apple in half with his bare hands, juggle anything you threw at him, split logs with a single swing, turn any gathering into a dance party, and always, always, always, grill a steak to perfection. Dad would walk into a room and you could feel the air leave it as people caught their breath. He walked with the confidence of a man who could handle anything life threw at him.

My dad was the strongest, handsomest, fastest man I knew. He could drive a car like a stunt man, surf like a local, water ski like a pro, and of course, fly a fighter jet like... the world's greatest fighter pilot.

Mac McIntosh was a lifelong learner and teacher. When he spoke with you, you felt as though you were the only one in the room. He was a husband, a father, and a grandfather. His loss is immense and felt on a daily basis. (Rachael McIntosh Tuller, daughter, USAFA Class of 2005)