



Richard Hollis Helms

February 21, 1949 - May 13, 2024

On Monday, May 13th, 2024, Richard Hollis Helms, aviator, spy, entrepreneur, mentor, venture capitalist, caring husband, father, grandfather, brother, and uncle passed away peacefully at age 75 in his home surrounded by family after a courageous 6-year battle with ALS.

Richard was born into an Air Force family on February 21, 1949 at Eglin Air Force Base to Carl E. Helms and Jewell D. Helms (maiden name: Duncan). He grew up with his older brother, Carl “Butch” Helms, as they moved regularly across the country following their dad’s career in the Air Force. He graduated from Fairborn High School, in Dayton, OH, class of 1968 where he was senior class president, varsity football team captain, All-Western Ohio League, in the National Honor Society, student council, letterman’s club, and Civil Air Patrol, through which he learned to fly.

Richard earned a bachelor's degree in international relations and economic development policy in 1972 and a master's degree in national security policy in 1973 from American University. While he was at American University he worked as a security guard for the Central Intelligence Agency, and that was the beginning of his nearly 30-year career for the CIA where he was an Arabist in the Middle East, and Chief of Station or Deputy Chief of Station in various locations across the world including Latin America, Asia, Europe, and the United States. He was involved in intelligence-gathering, clandestine anti-

terrorism intelligence programs, counter-terrorism/counter-narcotics programs, and was often referred to as the “rock-star of the CIA.”

Upon retirement he entered the private sector where he encountered an inflexible corporate structure unable to utilize his skillset. When the agency did not call on his and his colleagues’ profound expertise after 9/11, he founded Abraxas Corporation for which he won the 2006 Ernst and Young National Entrepreneur of the Year Award for Emerging Technology. 10 years after it was created, Richard sold Abraxas and started Ntrepid Corporation which is still successfully developing cutting-edge software to save the world.

While he was a career trainee at the CIA he went on a blind date with Teresa Rose McGraw and a few years later, after being evacuated from Beirut to Tunisia, he proposed long-distance and they got married in February 1976. Richard and Teresa welcomed their son Alexander Hollis Helms in September 1981, and their daughter Lindsay Rose Helms in December 1983. While lying to their children and pretending to have routine office jobs, Richard and Teresa together pursued their international clandestine careers. Once certain that their son wouldn’t run and tell everybody, they broke the news to their children by showing them the movie “True Lies.”

A little while after Richard retired from the CIA he bought a horse farm in Florida for his wife Teresa that also spoke to his first love, flying, as it had its own private airfield. While he started to step back from his company and he was “living the dream” he often spent hours flying his stunt plane, taking slow rides in his open-air bi-plane, or flying around in his helicopter. He’d hop in a plane to head to the coast for lunch, take the helicopter up to a local restaurant for dinner, and always wanted to share his love for flying with anybody and everybody whether that meant scaring the bejeezus out of them doing aerobatic maneuvers or taking a tour of the local sites, which always included an aerial peek at a lonely giraffe.

Throughout his life he delighted in the art of subterfuge and pranks. From regularly jumping out of the shadows at his daughter coming home late at night, to elaborately convincing both his son and a close friend that intricate hand movements would magically open things, to having a passenger in the copilot seat quickly look through thousands of pages of a flying manual to figure out why the plane was flashing red and beeping mid-flight while watching calmly from the pilot's seat, everyone who knew him has a story about a prank he pulled. A consummate trickster, this was one of the ways in which he shared his zeal and love for life with those around him.

His life's purpose, however, was to move the needle in order to garner the most positive change for humanity. He did this by investing in the energy, technology, and biotechnology sectors. He made large contributions to his high school that provided students with one-to-one technology which was critical during the early part of the COVID pandemic, and substantially helped with the construction of a new high school, middle school, and athletic fields. While he was sequestered to the farm due to COVID and his limited mobility, he also aggressively pursued treatments and medications for neurodegenerative diseases that had so afflicted him and his wife by creating the nonprofit Neurodegenerative Disease Research. NDR has funded dozens of novel research studies across the world and has successfully created a drug to benefit patients suffering from ALS and other diseases and is currently in phase I human trials.

He is survived by his wife, Teresa Helms (McGraw); brother, Carl Helms (Cindy); son Alexander Helms (Dana); daughter Lindsay Helms (Joel Nevells); and grandchildren Hollyn Helms, Lincoln Helms, and Illyria Nevells. He is preceded in death by his parents Carl Helms and Jewell Helms.

Richard's Celebration of Life will be held in Florida on May 25th. The family asks that any memorial tributes be made in the form of charitable donations to <https://www.ndrinc.org/>

Previous Events

Family and Friends

MAY 25. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (ET)

Reluctant Gremlin Private Airstrip
13195 NW 87th Avenue Road
Reddick , FL 32686

Celebration of Life

MAY 25. 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM (ET)

Reluctant Gremlin Private Airstrip
13195 NW 87th Avenue Road
Reddick , FL 32686

Tribute Wall



“ Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Richard Hollis Helms.



May 22, 2024 at 07:02 PM



“ My Quarterback from the Seventh Grade to a Senior in High School. You will never be forgotten your legacy is the donations you made to Fairborn High School. RIP my friend.

Garry Fabian - May 22, 2024 at 05:11 PM



“ Thank you for your belief in and commitment to Fairborn City Schools and the Fairborn community. Your generous donations have had such a positive impact on the community and I will forever be grateful for your belief in and support of Fairborn City Schools. From the bottom of my heart-thank you. With sympathy-Pam Gayheart

Pam Gayheart - May 21, 2024 at 10:29 AM



I remember his famous “jump pass“ as a quarterback on our high school football team. He he leaves quite a legacy and will be missed. Greg.

G. Gregory Schivley - May 22, 2024 at 06:04 PM