



Thomas Kirkland

March 7, 1929 - November 7, 2022

We are heartbroken to announce the death of our father, Thomas Roy Kirkland. Born on March 7, 1929, in Cleveland Ohio to Willard and Grace (Young) Kirkland, he passed away peacefully on November 7, 2022, in Tucker, Georgia at the age of 93 surrounded by family. A gravesite service will take place at 12pm on Saturday, November 19th at Resthaven Cemetery, 2284 Candler Road, Decatur GA 30032, and repass immediately following at the home of Karen Drake, 3109 Albatross Lane, Decatur GA 30034.

Dad started working at National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) in 1962 and retired in 1990 where his career spanned almost 30 years starting as an experimental model designer (building rocket parts) and finishing as a production controller.

He was also an entrepreneur and opened his own business in the late 50s, "True View" TV and Electronics Repair on E 79th Street between Kinsman and Cedar Rd. He also sold records in the store—back then, records were called 45s and 78s. He kept his business going for 15 years. He was extremely handy, innovative, and creative and could make practically anything out of raw materials like metal and wood.

At just 16 years old, dad signed up for the military (Army) below the legal age of consent and served two years fighting in World War II (Korea).

Dad enjoyed family gatherings and whenever we got together, we ALWAYS got a game started. Mostly we played card games, board games or the Kirkland's all-time favorite, Pokeno! Although we played for small change (usually nickels, dimes, or quarters), we were serious about upholding the rules, without exception, and anyone breaking them, got called out. As he got older, Dad became notorious for violating most of the rules by anteing up incorrectly and claiming victory prematurely or erroneously, ha-ha! Of course, we all talked a lot of "smack" throughout the game, but that's what made it so much fun!

Along with playing games, Dad loved listening to music, playing his guitar, watching comedy shows (Sanford & Son was a favorite), and was a natural comedian himself, ALWAYS CRACKING A JOKE!

Of special note, Dad was an accomplished chess player. He taught all of his children how to play, and was part of NASA Research's chess club, "The Chessnuts".

He dabbled in photography and loved making home movies with 8mm film and slides. As a family, we had a ball watching all the old home movies he made of us from the time we were infants to teenagers... It was lights, camera, action!! Dad ran the movies, and us kids controlled the lights, turning them on and off, on cue whenever the film jammed or broke and needed a quick repair (almost every movie required a quick fix at some point) lol. Looking back, we are so glad he captured all those random moments and turned them into lasting memories for us to cherish forever.

He was very athletic and participated and competed in many sports like basketball, football, running, swimming, well into his 70's. I am constantly reminded by my childhood friends, that Dad was affectionately known as, "The

Man from Glad” because of his white hair. He is also known for starting the “Longwood Tigers” little league softball team, in the community we lived in, which spanned over 5 years back in the 60’s.

He loved everything outdoors and was a nature and animal lover. He loved to take the family on camping trips, nature hikes, picnics and to Woodhill Park and Euclid Beach. Sometimes he’d take our dog along too. Another thing he enjoyed was his aquarium with exotic tropical fish.

He had a love of theatre, and natural talent for acting, singing, modeling, and playing musical instruments (his Spanish guitar). As an actor, he performed in plays and musicals at various venues, most notably he was on the board and performed at Karamu House, founded in 1915 and recognized as the oldest producing African American theatre in the nation!! Also, cited as one of Cleveland’s top four treasures, and featured in the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, and listed on the US National Registry of Historic Places.

Additionally, he performed on NASA’s Performing Arts Team, and had a leading part in a nationally telecast production of a children’s play (along with two of his children) which aired on PBS in the late 60’s.

He is preceded in death by his parents, brother, and loving wife of 73 years, Mayme Estellar Kirkland who passed away on February 9, 2021, at the age of 93.

He is survived by 6 children: Kenneth D. Kirkland, Karen R. Drake, Linda C. Williams, Lawrence E Kirkland (Bureasa), Thomas R. Kirkland Jr. (AnnMarie) and Faran Gaines

10 grandchildren: Kenneth Dale Kirkland II (Angela), Tangie D. Williams, Crystal C. Carter (Eron), Bianca S. Baker (Benjamin), Kenneth Dawson Kirkland (Jelena), Melvin L. Drake (Natasha), Lawrence B. Kirkland (Amanda), Karlen Kirkland, Grace Kirkland and Larenz Kirkland

20 great-grandchildren: Christopher, Kennedy B, Jaylen, Chynna, Khailand, Jordan, Anaya, Josiah, Isaiah, Khasen, Miles, Khian, Kaylin, Zair, Cameron, Rain, Kennedy D, London, Lawson, and Lennox

May he forever rest in peace!

Tribute Wall

SM

“ To Karen and Siblings,
Reading your Dad’s obituary, I could literally hear Karen’s voice speaking the words. All of you and yours have my deepest sympathy and condolences.
Your parents were 2 of my favorite people who I loved and admired. To be perfectly honest, your Dad was also one of the most handsome men I have ever seen, even as he aged, and I always told Karen that. 🌸
I had no idea of his many loves, hobbies, talents and interests! It seems that he was ahead of his time.
What I do know is that both your parents loved each of you dearly and believed in the deep foundation of “Family”, no matter what. Family was everything to them 💕
He has left each of you with wonderful memories.
Because of his wisdom and brilliance, whenever you are in a situation that you are unsure of, ask yourself, “What would my Dad do?” Whenever you figure that out, I am certain THAT will be the answer!
May the Lord comfort your broke hearts.
My love,
~Sherry

Sherry Johnson Marshall - November 21, 2022 at 02:19 PM

LK

Thanks for sharing that memory of dad, Sherry. Really appreciate it!

Linda Christian Kirkland - December 26, 2022 at 01:15 AM

EF

“ We would like to extend our condolences to the family. May God comfort you through his word the Bible and the gift of prayer. Thinking of you all.

Evans family - November 15, 2022 at 05:54 AM

MM

My condolences to the family. May he RIP

Myra Miller - November 18, 2022 at 06:24 PM

LK

Thank you! 🙏🙏🙏

Linda Christian Kirkland - December 26, 2022 at 01:16 AM