



Stephen Franklin Black

July 23, 1937 - January 8, 2026

Stephen Franklin Black, 88, of Eastover, NC formerly of Melbourne, Florida passed away peacefully on January 8, 2026, leaving behind a life marked by service, adventure, and quiet acts of generosity.

Stephen was a proud Vietnam veteran who devoted 33 years to military service, retiring with the rank of Sergeant First Class (E-7). His dedication, discipline, and sense of duty defined much of his life and earned him the respect of those who served alongside him.

During his military career, Stephen earned his license to operate and navigate passenger-carrying vessels, a skill that led to a second career as Yacht Captain. Alongside his beloved wife, Patricia, he maintained yachts and sailed up and down the East Coast for several years. Eventually, Stephen and Pati chose a new adventure-traveling the United States together and enjoying the freedom of the open road.

Stephen found joy in simple and meaningful pursuits. One of his greatest pleasures was raising butterflies with a group of friends and then gifting them to family and loved ones-a reflection of his gentle spirit and thoughtful nature. He was preceded in death by his wife of 24 years, Patricia "Pati" Whitright Black, and by his daughter, Shari Black Mathewson, and grandson, Wesley Black.

Stephen leaves behind to cherish his memory his children, Raymond Black (Denise), Kenneth Black, Tina Elsenpeter, and Sharron (Jr.) Barnhill; by 12 grandchildren and 20 great grandchildren; his cousin, Buz Rummel; and

several special friends in Melbourne, Florida, who will miss him dearly. Stephen Franklin Black will be remembered for his service to his country, his love of travel and the sea, and the quiet kindness he shared with those around him.

The family is grateful for the care and kindness shown during this time. Private family services.