

Donald Edward Stullken

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Dr. Donald E. (Doc) Stullken Capt. USNR (ret.) died December 13, 2009 in Pensacola, FL. He was the husband of Elizabeth Russell (Betty) Stullken, with whom he shared 67 years of marriage. He was a veteran on active duty in World War II and the Korean War. Born in Sullivan, IL April 11, 1920, he was the son of Edward H. and Mary Schumacher Stullken. He earned degrees from DePauw University and Purdue University including an MS and PHD in physiology.

Doc was attached to the US Naval School of Aviation Medicine both in active Navy service and as a civil servant from 1942 until 1961 researching aviation physiology and developing survival and safety techniques. He developed compact survival equipment packages for naval aviators. In 1958 Doc was assigned as a team member of the Navy's Bioastronautics Research Project to develop the bio-capsules used to send the monkeys "Old Reliable" and "Baker" into space.

Doc was invited to join NASA in 1961. He served as Chief of Recovery Operations Branch for the Mercury, Gemini, Apollo, Skylab, and ASTM Missions. He designed the "Stullken" floatation collar, which helped to stabilize and buoy the space capsules after splashdown.

Doc was a firefighter for the Seabrook, Texas Volunteer Fire Department. He was an avid hunter, fisherman, gardener and bridge player. He loved the outdoors, and was a supporting member of both Ducks Unlimited and the Wild Turkey Federation. He read extensively and was also a great storyteller.

In addition to his wife he is survived by his sons Russell (Elizabeth), William (Katherine) and seven grandchildren, as well as a sister, Ruth Witmer and many nieces and nephews. He was predeceased by his son Kurt (Lenora), a sister, Marjorie Lee, and a half-brother Edward H. Stullken, Jr.

Those wishing to make a contribution in his memory may do so to the National Naval Aviation Museum Foundation, Inc., 1750 Radford Blvd., Suite B, NAS Pensacola, Pensacola, FL 32508. www.navalaviationmuseum.org