



George Albert McFarland, Jr.

JUN 28, 1930 - JUN 1, 2019



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George A. McFarland, Jr., retired US diplomat, Air Force pilot, sculptor, adventurer and free-thinker, and beloved husband, father, and grandfather, died on June 1, 2019. He was just shy of his 89th birthday and had spent the day joyfully celebrating and reflecting on the 45th anniversary of his marriage to Rosario, the love of his life.

Many of the traits that defined George—the curiosity about the world, grit, and passion for nature, art, and public service—were present in him since his Dallas, Texas, youth. As a kid, he changed lightbulbs in the exhibits at the Museum of Natural History, where he explored his fascination with wildlife. A boy scout, he went camping as a teen for days on end. He liked drawing ships--looking at his fingertip as a model for the shape of a hull--and he learned woodworking. Coming of age during the Great Depression, FDR's New Deal, and World War II, he grew up believing in public service through government. He frightened his mom at age 12, when US officials knocked on their door inquiring about him: George had written to the military, offering to help the war effort with the (imaginary) weapons he was building.

In college, George studied journalism and worked as a part-time reporter for the Dallas Time-Herald, United Press, and Time Magazine before joining the Air Force. After enduring a brutal pilot training that killed many of his peers and flying a B-29 on 20 combat missions during the Korean War, George joined the Strategic Air Command and made the rank of Air Force captain. But having seen war, he walked away from the military to work for peace as a US Foreign Service Officer. His career took him to sometimes hazardous postings in Costa Rica, Cyprus, Turkey (twice), Peru, Brazil and Antigua, and he learned to speak Turkish, Spanish and Portuguese fluently. George had two children, Steve and Anne, from his first marriage, and they joined him in his early exploration of the world, including visits to Troy, Machu Picchu, and the Amazon rainforest.

In October 1972, at a friend's party in Lima, George started chatting with a confident and lively Peruvian woman who loved to sing and play guitar, Rosario Sánchez-Moreno Ramos. Their



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conversation flew by, going on until 5am: “What an interesting guy,” Rosario thought to herself later. The two fell in love, and on June 1, 1974, they were married in an intimate garden ceremony in Ankara, Turkey.

Turkey was a special country to George, who was fascinated by its rich history and beauty and felt a great affinity for its people and culture. As political counselor there in the mid-1970s he forged strong relationships with many Turks. During their five years there, he and Rosario, eventually joined by their baby Maria, explored the country, hiking through pristine forests and ancient ruins, as well as rambling all over Istanbul, which he knew like the back of his hand.

George had an extraordinary capacity for reinvention and fearlessly pursued his passions. After taking early retirement from the Foreign Service, he moved with Rosario, Maria, and his youngest, John, to Lima, Peru. It was a turbulent time, with the country embroiled in an internal armed conflict that made travel outside the city risky, and often led to blackouts and even bombings in town. But George took his family on countless adventures, camping in the desert and on the beach, driving over snow-capped peaks to reach the remote “Valley of the Volcanoes,” discovering little-known petroglyphs and ruins for pre-Inca cultures. He took a stab at writing novels and, with Rosario, turned a rubble-filled vacant lot behind their house into a leafy public park. He also became an essential member of the Sánchez-Moreno family, and considered Rosario’s father, Francisco, to be his best friend.

While in Peru, George’s woodworking hobby—which had previously involved building canoes, bookcases, and tables—started to become his art. Self-taught, he eventually created stunning, beautifully finished modernist sculptures. When the family moved to Austin, Texas, he had solo shows at the Davis Gallery. After he and Rosario moved to Annapolis, MD, in 2009, he exhibited in several galleries between DC and Maryland.

George was exceedingly well-read and liked word games, puns, and poetry. An evening of Scrabble with George was a hilarious master class in combining high word counts with an inexhaustible vocabulary. He enjoyed classical music—Tchaikovsky’s Fifth was his wedding song—jazz and the classic American songbook, as well as Rosario’s singing. He was a perfectionist, and that was evident in everything from his handwriting and carving to his brilliantly composed letters. George was strong in every respect, a jogger, former boxer, and weight-lifter who at age 88 was still lifting huge pieces of wood and prided himself on his great health. An introvert and private in many ways, George was also generous and social, and appreciated thoughtful, wide-



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ranging discussions. His friends valued his kindness, intellect, and deeply principled and good nature.

He was deeply connected to nature: while not a fan of institutional religion, George found spirituality in the outdoors, near trees, flowers, and birds. In Annapolis, George spent hours gardening, and in his final weeks enjoyed a spectacular springtime showing of camellia, rhododendron, azalea, magnolia, crabapple, dogwood, and hydrangea flowers.

As a father and grandfather, George was gentle, playful, wise, and unconditionally supportive. He filled his children's lives with treasure hunts, tickling and jokes, huge quantities of books, from Winnie-the-Pooh to Shakespeare, and long, fascinating conversations.

But of all George's remarkable traits, perhaps what most stands out was one: his loving spirit, which shone through in his smile. Those of us who were lucky enough to have been held in that gaze will miss him terribly, but we will carry that boundless love with us always.

George is survived by his wife Rosario; his children, Stephen, Anne, Maria, and John; his daughters-in-law Karin and Ivonne and sons-in-law John and Phelim; his grandchildren Christopher, Alex, Andrew, Kevin, Sofia, Seamus, and Natalia, and granddaughter-in-law Kasia; his nieces Sharon, Anna, and Marsha; and an enormous extended Sánchez-Moreno family in Peru.

Funeral services will be private. We urge those wishing to make donations in his name to contribute to the Audubon Society or the Sierra Club.

To share with George's family please visit: <https://bit.ly/2XBkXnK>



Tribute Wall

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SM

Sofia Mcfarland shared a photo to the **Tribute Wall** album.

My grandfather and I in Gettysburg. I don't think I was older than 8 in this photo, but I think he was explaining to me how this machine worked.

April 5 at 3:08 PM



JW

Jody Waddell posted:

We are sorry to hear of your loss. Everyone at the office always looked forward to seeing Mr. Mcfarland. He was a gentleman, always smiling and brightened our day. He will be missed by Dr. Jody Waddell and staff.

July 11 at 10:47 AM

LM

Love, Hugo & Kasia Moreno sent a Love's Journey to the McFarland, family.

June 10 at 7:39 AM





Media

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April 5 at 3:08 PM





Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring George by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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