



Joe Edward Milner Obituary



December 13, 1931 - January 9, 2024

Colonel Joe E. Milner, 92, retired Director of The Texas Department of Public Safety and Chief of The Texas Rangers died on National Law Enforcement Appreciation Day, January 9, 2024.

Joe Milner was a man of uncompromising principle, courage, keen intellect, and unfailing wit, all of which served him well throughout his life and earned him the respect of his troopers, colleagues, friends, and family.

Joe Milner was born in Pineland, Texas and grew up in Goliad, Texas graduating from Goliad High School in 1949. He enlisted in the United States Navy and served aboard the USS Ajax and USS Cacapon during the Korean War. After being honorably discharged from the Navy, he served in the Naval Reserve where he attained the rank of Seaman 1st Class. He then worked as a surveyor and land man for Union Oil Company. This job took him to Palestine, Texas where he met, fell in love, and married Shirley Lively in 1953. He always said that was the best thing that ever happened to him. Shirley gave him unconditional love, support, friendship and their wonderful union of 67 years also produced the light of his life, his daughter, Melonie Diane.

Joe began his training at the DPS Academy on October 11, 1954, with his recruit class being the last class trained at Camp Mabry in Austin. While quickly being promoted up through the ranks, he was stationed in Edna, Conroe, Lufkin, Harlingen, and Houston. During his distinguished career, he became the youngest Sergeant, youngest Lieutenant, and youngest Captain ever promoted in DPS history. In 1968, DPS created the office of Chief of Traffic Law Enforcement, and Joe was promoted to that position and assigned to the headquarters in Austin. In 1987, he was promoted to Assistant Director, and in 1988, he was appointed to Director of the Texas Department of Public Safety and Chief of The Texas Rangers. During his tenure at the DPS, Milner created and implemented many programs that revolutionized Texas law enforcement including: Automated Fingerprint Identification Systems, DNA testing on criminal evidence submitted by law enforcement agencies across Texas and the alcohol breath testing program. He also appointed the first African-American trooper as well as the first African-American Texas Ranger. Culminating an esteemed 38-year career, he retired from DPS in August of 1991.

Additionally, Joe served as President of the North Austin Rotary Club (Paul Harris Fellow), President of the Texas Public Employees Association, and was a member of the International Association of Chiefs of Police, Texas Police Association, Texas Sheriffs Association, and 42nd Degree Mason.

Upon retirement, Joe volunteered for many years at Seton Hospital and became a member of Great Hills Country Club where he spent many happy hours playing golf with friends and family. He also enjoyed multiple trips and cruises with Shirley and friends. He was a lover of the arts including theatre, choral music as well as instrumental music, classical and contemporary music. He was an avid reader and poetry enthusiast. He reveled in being a Dallas Cowboys, Lady Longhorns Basketball and Baylor Bears fan.

Joe became a Christian at an early age and was a devoted member of Crestview Baptist, Hyde Park Baptist and finally First Baptist Church Georgetown. He was so looking forward to being reunited with his beloved wife, Shirley, and spending time in eternity talking with God about all the things that happened on Earth.

Joe Milner lived a full, happy, and contented life. He had an exceptional talent for telling stories and dreaming up and executing practical jokes. He celebrated life with unmatched acceptance and grace and an eternal positive attitude. He had a tender and compassionate heart and believed there was good in every one of God's creatures. His family was the center of his life and he was a loving and devoted son, brother, husband, and father.

Joe was preceded in death by his mother, Lillie Mae Cheshire, father, Oscar Milner, stepmother, Anna Crawley Milner, sister Francis Butcher, brothers Thomas Wilton Milner, James Clifton Milner, and Arthur Wayne Milner, and the love of his life, his wife Shirley Lively Milner.

He is survived by his sisters Barbara Johnson, and Sue Rashid (Mahmood) of Houston, daughter, Melonie Milner-Mills and son-in-law, Jim Mills of Georgetown, granddaughter, Madison Mills and great grandson JT Tapler and great granddaughter Josslyn Tapler of Kilgore, and numerous nieces, and nephews.

Joe's celebration of life service will be held on February 10, 2024 at 11:00 AM at First Baptist Church Georgetown, 1333 W. University Ave, Georgetown, TX 78628 with a reception immediately following. An interment ceremony will be held April 16, 2024 at The Texas State Cemetery, 909 Navasota St. Austin, TX 78702 at 2:00 PM. All are welcome to attend.

In lieu of flowers, please consider making a donation to The Salvation Army or a charity of your choice.