

Walter Knapp loved history, volunteering

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Walter "**Mickey**" **Knapp**, a retired Air Force lieutenant colonel and active community volunteer who was a founding member of the Sacramento History Museum, died March 13. He was 78.

He died of complications from diabetes, said his wife, Clare Ryder.

Mr. Knapp moved to Sacramento after retiring in 1977 as director of intelligence at Eglin Air Force Base in Florida. He began researching the Gold Rush era, completed a California history course and joined early volunteers at the Sacramento History Museum, now called the Discovery Museum.

"He enjoyed leading tours and telling people about exhibits," said Charlie Duncan, curator of the Eleanor McClatchy historical collection. "He was very dedicated to local history."

Mr. Knapp was a past president of the Sacramento Historical Society and a member of the History Museum of Folsom. He also belonged to the Old City Cemetery Committee and organized a daylong bus tour of Sacramento County historical sites.

"He researched it for a year or two, putting together the history of the county," said Dr. Bob LaPerriere, a cemetery committee founder. "He had a great love of history."

Walter Charles Knapp was born in 1929 in Peterborough, N.H. He graduated from high school in Montpelier, Vt., where his stepfather was the state's first air commissioner and a pilot for the governor.

He graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1952 and began a 25-year career in the Air Force. His assignments included top-secret intelligence during the Cold War, his wife said. He served at Air Force Systems Command in Washington and at bases in Iceland, Louisiana and Florida.

A first marriage ended in divorce. He married Clare Ryder, an Air Force nurse, in 1976. She and Mr. Knapp traveled widely, including visits to family back East and trips to Australia, New Zealand and Ireland.

But volunteering was his mainstay.

A charter docent of the Discovery Museum, Mr. Knapp helped train volunteers and wrote and edited promotional materials for the museum. He was a friendly, engaging speaker who liked sharing his interest in California history.

Before joining the history museum, he volunteered as a fund-raiser for the American Heart Association in Sacramento.

"Volunteering was his life after retiring," his wife said. "He enjoyed being with people."

Walter 'Mickey' Knapp

Born: June 20, 1929

Died: March 13, 2008

Remembered for: Founding member and charter docent of the Sacramento History Museum; past

president of the Sacramento Historical Society and member of the Old City Cemetery Committee; retired Air Force lieutenant colonel

Survived by: Wife, Clare Ryder of Folsom; sons, Stephen Knapp of Baltimore, Charles B. Knapp of Ohio and Raymond Knapp of Washington, D.C.; sister, Ann Volatile of Hyde Park, Vt.; brother, Edward Knapp of Branford, Conn.; nine grandchildren; and six great-grandchildren

Find A Grave:

Birth: Jun. 20, 1929
Peterborough
Hillsborough County
New Hampshire, USA
Death: Mar. 13, 2008
Roseville
Placer County
California, USA

Inscription:
"US AF"
"Rest In Peace"

Burial:
[Calvary Catholic Cemetery and Mausoleum](#)
Sacramento
Sacramento County
California, USA
Plot: Veterans Lawn