

William M. Roark, USNA Class of 1960, 1938-1965

Born in Sioux City, Iowa, LT Roark grew up in Omaha, NE, where he graduated from Central High School in 1956. At Central, he was cadet colonel and commanding officer of the school's Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps. It was also at Central that he met his future bride, Karen Krause.

LT Roark graduated from the Naval Academy in 1960 and was subsequently selected for aviation career path. He attended flight training in Pensacola, FL, and Beeville, TX, before his eventual selection to Attack Squadron 153 in Lemoore, CA.

LT Roark deployed twice with VA-153 aboard the USS Coral Sea (CVA-43). On the second deployment in 1965, the flight crews of the CORAL SEA saw the first heavy and sustained action of the war in Vietnam during Operation ROLLING THUNDER.

On 7 April, LT Roark was leading a two ship section armed reconnaissance mission in the area of Dong Hoi, North Vietnam. His flight detected an anti-aircraft artillery (AAA) site and engaged the target. Following the first attack, as the site had not been destroyed, LT Roark attacked again. On the second attack his aircraft was struck by the AAA. His A-4C Skyhawk was too severely damaged to continue, and LT Roark ejected over hostile coastal water where he was fired upon continuously while parachuting to the sea.

In last letter to his wife, LT Roark wrote "I don't want my sons to fight a war I should have fought. I wish more Americans felt that way. I will not live in a totalitarian society and I don't want you to, either. I believe in God and will resist any force that attempts to remove God from society, no matter what the name".

LT Roark was posthumously awarded the Purple Heart and the Distinguished Flying Cross. The Destroyer/ Frigate USS Roark (FF-1053) was named in his honor in 1967. The ROARK's fitting motto was "Victory Through Service".

In 2004, his alma mater, Central High School, named Roark to their hall of fame, and in 2005, the U.S. Naval Sea Cadets Corps of Dyersburg, TN, named their unit the LT William Roark squadron in his honor.

LT Roark is survived by his wife, Karen Phillips of Woodbridge, CT, and by his children Lisa Logan, John Roark, LCDR William Roark, and grand children Travis, Devin, Karleigh, Courtney, Lily and Ian.