

Lieutenant Commander Martin Stanley French USNR, Ret., passed away on Friday, January 23rd, 2026, after a long illness. Martin and his twin sister were born May 3rd, 1949, to Robert W French and Dorothy E. (Parker) of Bliss, New York.

He attended Houghton College in Houghton, NY, where he served on the Volunteer Fire Department and was known to leave class if the fire siren sounded, even if it was in the middle of an exam. It was at Houghton that he met the love of his life, Virginia "Ginny" Fero.

Shortly after college graduation in 1972, he enlisted in the US Navy and was stationed in Norfolk, VA. While at Norfolk, he would write to friends at Houghton, and when granted weekend leave, he would hitchhike back to the Bliss/Houghton area to visit Ginny. In February 1973, he married Ginny, beginning a marriage that lasted 53 years.

Martin was on active duty for 6 years, stationed in Maryland, Florida, and Texas. After leaving active duty, he transferred to the Navy Reserve and moved his family to Houston, TX, where he found work as a Construction Superintendent. While in Houston, he bought his first house and had a small woodworking business. When the construction bust hit in 1985, he found work first in New Jersey before being asked to rejoin the company from Texas in their new Fairfax, VA office. When he was offered the job in Virginia, it was in the middle of the school year, so his family stayed in New Jersey briefly while he rented a basement room near George Mason University and searched for houses pre-Internet, describing each house over the phone and mailing Ginny labeled polaroids of each room.

The family settled in Manassas, VA in 1986, where they found a church they enjoyed and Marty became a well-known member of their community as a Cub Scout leader and a parent volunteer at church and school. Marty was born with a heart for service and loved helping with the community Thanksgiving dinners, after-service meals, and even smoking turkeys with the youth group as a fundraiser. His contributions to the church included years of helping to oversee Easter pageant stage construction and traveling to Alaska as part of a construction team to help run electrical wiring in a church that was being built.

Throughout his life, Marty enjoyed serving his community as a volunteer firefighter, volunteering with the Red Cross Disaster Response Team and SBC Disaster Response Team, and as a Boy Scout leader teaching emergency preparedness. One of his proudest contributions was the year he spent working with ACTS as the Project Manager for their new facility, getting to put his years of construction knowledge to use, building something that would benefit people in crisis.

He found great joy in feeding others and experimenting with new recipes. He was able to share this passion at church breakfasts, elementary school festivals, Model A club picnics, scout campouts, and as part of several disaster relief teams.

He served in the US Navy Reserve for 20 years before retiring. He retired from Winchester Homes in 2009. After he retired, he began researching his family's genealogy from where his father left off. He loved discovering a new person on his family tree or being able to contribute information from his family's papers to help answer someone else's genealogy questions.

Although Marty's health situation did not allow him to continue as a first responder in the last few years, he still did what he could to contribute: in 2024, just after hurricanes devastated parts of North Carolina, he donated his cooking tents, stoves, and a trailer to a response team headed down to feed the first responders.

Those who knew Marty will tell you he always had a pun ready and always had a story to tell. Even on the day he was flown to UVA Medical Center, when asked about his first helicopter flight, he responded, "It wasn't very exciting. We didn't even get to divert to save anyone."

After the passing of his own father, a fluke conversation landed Marty the chance to fulfill a childhood dream of owning the fire truck his father had driven. With the help of friends, he returned the 1929 Model AA Buffalo Conversation fire truck to driving condition and was able to take the truck to many car shows. He won several awards, including the Manager's Choice at his first competition. While some other classic car owners do not want anyone to touch their cars, he found great joy in letting kids climb up and sit behind the wheel of the truck just like he had as a little boy.

He is preceded in death by his parents. He is survived by his wife Virginia, four children: Megan (French) Coleman, Katie, Amy and Matthew French, and 4 grandchildren.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made in Marty's name to World Central Kitchen wck.org or ACTS actspwc.org