



LTC (Ret) Michael R. Greer

Michael Roberts Greer was born in Chanute, Kansas, December 16, 1938, and soon moved to Texas, settling in Littlefield, Texas. Michael graduated from Littlefield High School in 1957. During his adolescent years he was very involved with his church and Boy Scout activities where he was awarded the prestigious "God and Country" award. While growing up in Littlefield, Texas he was very active in two sports, football and track. During his high school football career, he was the starting running back for the Wildcats each year until graduation in 1957 and was co-captain for the 1956 football team. He also competed in high school track as a sprinter. He accepted a full athletic scholarship to play football at the University of Houston, where he also ran track for the national undefeated track team of U of H. After spending two years at the University of Houston, Michael decided to transfer to Arlington State College where he had initially been recruited by Coach Chena Gilstrap. After 3 workouts with the ASC team, he was offered, and accepted, a full 3-year scholarship to play football. He also ran track in the spring and became a two-sport letterman for the Rebels. Michael was elected team captain of the track team his senior year. The transfer to Arlington State gave him a chance to focus on his education, plus continue his goal to receive a commission in the US Army by enrolling in ROTC. Michael served as the Cadet Battalion Executive Officer in ROTC his senior year. He graduated with a BBA from Arlington State College and was commissioned in the US Army in 1963.

Michael entered active duty at Ft. Riley, Kansas with the 4th Armored Cavalry as a Platoon Leader in Bravo Troop, 1st Infantry Division. Under LT Greer's leadership, the First Platoon

distinguished itself by excelling in readiness exercises resulting in LT Greer being selected as commander of Troop B. Upon completion of an outstanding troop command Michael returned to civilian life and entered the business world and became an industrial packaging innovator for the cotton industry. This led him to the material handling side of the cotton industry with new innovations for both handling and packaging. Additionally, he created a multi-sport event production company. He created 50 triathlon events in 8 cities with the cornerstone event, Ironman70.3 Lubbock, that became a world recognized event now entering its 30th year. He also joined the US Army Reserves and served as the Commanding Officer of the 413th Civil Affairs provisional Civil Affairs Company in Lubbock, Texas. Later CPT Greer became the commanding officer of Co B, 980th Engineers for four years. After being promoted to Major he was reassigned to the 414th Civil Affairs. MAJ Greer was then promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and served as the G5 Civil Affairs staff officer for the 2nd Armored Division in Patterborne, Germany during a combined exercise in Europe.

In 1992, Michael earned his PhD as a Doctor of Philosophy from LaSalle University. He later became certified in the following fields: legal mediator, life coach, emotional intelligence and parenting coordinator. He served on 6 nonprofit boards and was elected to board president on 4 of these boards. He also authored 3 books: "Mind Management"; "11 Points of Healthy Ageless Living"; and the "Triathlon Guidebook".

As a lifelong athlete Michael continued to compete in the sport of triathlon at the age of 44. After 35 years of competition he was able to complete his 400th triathlon on September 23, 2018. He was elected to the Texas Triathlon Hall of Fame in 2009 and the SMW Hall of Fame in 2011. He has also been nominated for the 2019 USA Triathlon National Hall of Fame.

The highlight of his military career was his commissioning at Arlington State College into the US Army as a 2LT and the swearing in of his son and nephew as Lieutenants in the US Army. Both are currently Lieutenant Colonels and have each served in 3 war zones.

LTC Greer currently resides in Ransom Canyon, Texas with his wife Marti. They have 5 grown children, 15 grandchildren, and 4 great grandchildren.

Obituary

Mike Greer was a face of triathlon, nationally and even internationally, completing more than 400 races and making a lasting impact with the ordinary people he brought to the sport as a race director and tireless promoter.

He founded the Buffalo Springs Lake Triathlon in 1990 with 91 participants, then built it to the stature of attracting top professionals who viewed the West Texas course and summer climate as ideal preparation for the annual Ironman World Championships in Hawaii.

Along the way, he served as president of USA Triathlon and later interim CEO.

Greer died early Wednesday at age 82 from complications in recovery from a motorcycle wreck. He suffered the accident June 27, on the way to and an hour before the start of IRONMAN 70.3 Lubbock.

"He was such a force of nature, such a lovely force of nature," said Marti Greer, Mike Greer's wife and liaison between the City of Lubbock and IRONMAN. "He inspired so many people with what he would say: 'I'm not a triathlete. I'm a person who does triathlon.' He was never fast or gifted (in triathlon); he was just tenacious.

"He just loved the sport and loved the people in the sport, loved getting to know all of them and tell them all his story."

Coming to triathlon in 1984, Greer became a competitor, volunteer, sponsor and race director, remaining visible and active throughout the past 37 years. He coached others not only in the sport, but on his "11 Points of Healthy Ageless Living."

He took his motorcycle out on the course of the Buffalo Springs/Lubbock triathlons to oversee quality control and check on athletes.

Greer died just before 3 a.m. Wednesday at Covenant Medical Center, his wife said, 24 days after his accident. He was injured on E. 19th Street, on his way from Ransom Canyon, where he lived, to Dunbar Lake, where IRONMAN 70.3 Lubbock starts. No other vehicles were involved.

He underwent emergency surgery that day for injuries that included fractures to his ribs, pelvis and spine. After a week in intensive care and another week hospitalized, he had done about 10 days of physical therapy, occupational therapy and speech therapy, his wife said.

"He was working at it. He was really working at it," she said. "He was doing it like a champ. But that accident was so traumatic."

Greer grew up in Littlefield and went to college at the University of Houston and UT-Arlington as a running back in football and a sprinter in track and field. He took up distance running in the late 1970s and ran 44 marathons.

It was another few years before he found a calling in the long-distance swim, bike and run.

He competed in his first triathlon — the race setting the Guadalupe Mountains — in 1984. He completed his 400th in September 2018, reaching that milestone with the last eight coming 13 months after he suffered a stroke. He wound up doing 403.

"He had more that we had already registered for this year," Marti Greer said, "but this happened."

Greer originated the Buffalo Springs Lake Triathlon as an Olympic-distance event. In 1994, it became a 70.3-mile race. The event was centered around Buffalo Springs Lake for its first 29 years before it relocated in 2019 and was renamed IRONMAN 70.3 Lubbock.

Describing Greer's foray into triathlon, his wife said, "He got very enthralled with the idea of it because (the IRONMAN World Championships at) Kona became a regular thing on TV, the one time a year, and that interested him. He finally gave it a shot, trying sprint triathlon, and you just get hooked.

"Then from there, he noticed that there was a perfect venue for the sport of triathlon (around Buffalo Springs Lake): a beautiful lake, gorgeous biking (route) and then the running."

Greer completed seven IRONMAN events — swimming 2.4 miles, cycling 112 miles and running a marathon of 26.2 miles — including two at the World Championships.

On the occasion of his 400th, a USA Triathlon story at teamusa.org noted Greer launched and organized 50 events across Texas and the Southwest.

"You aren't in race promotion for the money," he said in the story. "It's psychic income. I know I can't make a deposit at the bank with it. But I have people say, 'This race has changed my life. This sport has changed my life.' That right there, that keeps me going and keeps me here. Just to know you've had a positive influence over someone you just met, that is cool."

Another of his contributions was coming up with the idea of aquabike: A race with swimming and cycling for those who are unable to run.

"He did a lot of things trying to help the sport become more organized, trying to help people who needed a different way to do the sport," Marti Greer said.

A visitation is scheduled for 2 p.m. Sunday at Sanders Funeral Home. A funeral service is planned for 1 p.m. Monday.

In addition to his wife, Greer is survived by three daughters, a son, 15 grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.

<https://www.lubbockonline.com/story/sports/2021/07/21/triathlon-icon-mike-greer-founder-31-year-event-lubbock-dies-82/8049357002/>