

FRESNO GUARD PILOT DIES BRIG. GEN. JAMES A. KILPATRICK COMMANDED FRESNO FIGHTER WING.

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Brig. Gen. **James A. Kilpatrick**, a veteran fighter pilot and former commander of the Fresno-based 144th Fighter Interceptor Wing of the California Air National Guard, died Friday in Santa Rosa.

He was 70.

Kilpatrick, who lived in Fresno, served 36 years in the National Guard, culminating with a nine-year tenure as commander of the Fresno base before retiring in 1982.

"He was almost like an institution here at the base. . . . He made the Air Guard what it is today," said Maj. John Cotter, spokesman for the Fresno base.

"He was a leader, a people person who was genuinely interested in the lives and welfare of the people who served under him," he said. "He was a great guy and we're really going to miss him."

An avid car racer who loved Porsches, **Kilpatrick** often competed in national races. He was preparing for another race in Santa Rosa.

He is survived by his wife, Emmy **Kilpatrick** of Fresno, and a daughter, Kathy **Kilpatrick**, also of Fresno.

Memorial services are being scheduled.

Born in San Francisco, **Kilpatrick** became a pilot in 1943 and joined the 144th in 1951 when the unit was based in Hayward. He later became commander of the 194th Fighter Interceptor Squadron. In 1963, he was promoted to director of operations for the 144th Fighter Group.

Kilpatrick became a wing commander while still a colonel in 1973, a slot usually held by someone of a higher rank.

Kilpatrick became a brigadier general and was named to the California National Guard's top post - chief of staff for air operations and training.

But because he did not want to leave Fresno, he resigned the position and remained commander of the 144th Fighter Wing.

He had logged more than 7,000 hours in the air.

Kilpatrick was named the Air Force Association Man of the Year in 1978 for risking his life to save five people from a burning aircraft. That same year he also served as head of the United Way combined federal campaign.

Caption: James A. Kilpatrick

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