

A private graveside ceremony for Col. Harold Boyd Birch, U.S. Army (Ret.), was held Monday, December 3, 2012, in the Hebrew Benevolent Society Cemetery. Hal Birch, who died Saturday, December 1, 2012, was born in Pittsburgh, PA on May 1, 1929. He was the son of the late Harold Boyd, Sr. and Helen Fulton Birch.

His educational degrees include a BS in Forestry from Penn State University, a Masters Degree in Education from Colorado State University, a Masters Degree in International Studies from George Washington University and a Ph.D in Political Science from the University of South Carolina. He was also a graduate of the Marine Corps Command & Staff College in Quantico, VA., and the National War College in Washington, D.C. At Colorado State University, he was a ROTC instructor and later served as a faculty member at both the Command & General Staff College in Fort Leavenworth, KS., and the Army War College in Carlisle, PA. At the Pentagon, he served as a staff officer, both on the Army Staff and with the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

During his 30 years of military service as an infantryman, Col. Birch was a Platoon Leader and Company Commander during the Korean War. In Vietnam he served as Battalion Commander of the 1st Battalion, 12th Infantry, 4th Division and then as Division Personnel Officer. His military service ended at Fort Jackson where he commanded a Brigade and then served as the post's operations officer. In addition to earning two Combat Infantry Badges, his awards included two Legions of Merit, three Bronze Stars for Valor, three Meritorious Service Medals, five Air Medals and a Purple Heart.

After his military retirement, Dr. Birch spent ten years at the University of South Carolina where he served as an Assistant Research Professor. There, he taught undergraduate and graduate classes and served as assistant to the department chairman. He published chapters in textbooks on state government and authored an instructor's guide for a textbook on state and local government. With other faculty members, he wrote and co-wrote numerous op-ed pieces that were published in newspapers in three states. After retirement from the University of South Carolina, he wrote and published two books about PA volunteer infantry regiments in the Civil War that had seen service in S.C. The 50th PA's Civil War Odyssey was published in 2003; The 101st PA in the Civil War in 2007.

In addition to his hunting and fishing activities, for many years he was President of the Midlands Penn State Alumni Group. He was also involved in a Great Books Discussion group and an active participant in First Nighters, a play-reading group. He was a member of the Korean War Memorial Committee that organized and oversaw the efforts that led to the erection of the Korean War Memorial in Memorial Park. Governor Hodges presented him with the Order of the Silver Crescent for his work and leadership in this effort.

He is survived by his wife of 58 years, Thalia Womersley Birch; his son and daughter-in-law, David Boyd and Alice Liu Birch; his grandson, William Boyd Birch and his brother, Robert W. Birch. In addition to his parents, he is predeceased by a sister, Beverly Birch Taylor.