



***“Because of everything Hospice provided,  
he was in heaven before heaven.” - Karyl W. Cochran***

Our family experienced hospice care first with our uncle, George “Boogie” Cochran, in 2017. He was transferred from the hospital and then did so well at the Margaret Dozier House, we thought for a while they might release him.

There was one volunteer we remember the most. He was so enamored with Boogie, especially his military service, that he helped arrange a Valor Ceremony. The young man was honorably discharged from the Navy as a Chief Petty Officer and Boogie – also a Navy veteran – shared his rank. While telling stories about the destroyer ships he worked on all over the world for 20 years, beginning in World War II, Boogie said, *“You know, they gave me the rank of Chief, but I never got my pin.”*

The young volunteer came in full dress uniform to the Valor Ceremony. The chapel was full! All of us who loved Boogie, including his sons George and Ray, and friends from Franklin County, were gathered.

We sat in awe as the young man walked up to Boogie, took off his gold Navy Chief lapel pin, and said, ***“I want you to have this.”***

Our daddy James R. “Dick” Cochran was there for the ceremony. He was seven years younger than Boogie, but also a veteran, having joined the U.S. Air Force after graduating high school during the Korean War. He served three years in Korea and Japan, assigned to the 311 Fighter Bomber Squadron as a jet mechanic.

Their early lives had taken the brothers in different directions, but they re-connected in the fall of 1985 for an eight-day adventure. They traveled over 700 miles on the Florida Intracoastal Waterway in a 14-foot metal johnboat. It was powered by a vintage 35 hp Evinrude motor that had never been cranked, with a 1-¼ hp motor for a backup.

The brothers left from Spring Creek, just south of Tallahassee, traveled down the west coast, then along the east coast, ending up in Fernandina Beach. Their only navigation tools were a Gulf Oil roadmap and a small compass; they averaged ninety miles a day. They cooked on a Coleman stove and slept in a two-man pup tent, even spending one night under the Tampa Bay Bridge. Excursion provisions: six mullet, two chickens, canned goods, water, coffee and some beer.

In 1999, the two brothers became next door neighbors at St. Teresa Beach on St. James Island, where their grandfather had been an early settler.

**A portion of the beach is still known as  
*Cochran Beach.***



Both Daddy and Boogie were well known at the coast. Boogie was one of the first year-round residents after he retired from Florida State University. Everyone called him the “Mayor” of St. Teresa. He volunteered at the Camp Gordon Johnston War Museum and was always helping people. He had keys to many houses at the coast and would go and check on them after a storm.

St. Teresa was such a special place to both brothers, and still is to our family, as we first settled there in 1903.

**We sprinkled a little St. Teresa Beach sand in each of their graves.**

Momma has always recalled how she met Daddy. At the end of his service career, he was stationed at an Air Force base in Peru, Indiana where nearby Momma was attending Nursing school. One night an Air Force buddy arranged a blind date for Daddy, and it just so happened it was Momma. She recalls, *“When I met him for the first time, that was it. I knew I wanted to marry that man!”*

Daddy came back to Tallahassee to go to Florida State University on the GI Bill. He sent Momma a box of slides with photos of his beloved Tallahassee. Buried in the box of slides was an engagement ring!

Momma and Daddy have four daughters.

**Daddy often told people, “I have a good poker hand, Four Queens!”**

Daddy fell in September of 2020 and his health deteriorated. There were a lot of COVID restrictions at the time, but once he was transferred to Big Bend Hospice – just like Boogie – he rallied. His appetite reappeared and he asked for breakfast, requesting sausage, grits and scrambled eggs. The Hospice chef honored his wishes. Daddy only tasted a pinch of each, but said it was the best breakfast he ever had.

In spite of visitation restrictions everywhere else, Big Bend Hospice gave our family the opportunity to be with our father.

**Daddy died peacefully surrounded by those he loved.**

Daddy and Uncle Boogie proudly served our country through their military service, and we are so grateful to Big Bend Hospice for providing our two special veterans compassionate care and a dignified end to their lives. It relieved all of us knowing they were physically comfortable and so well honored. And that’s why we’re sharing our story.

We all benefited from Big Bend Hospice, and we want to make sure anyone who needs it has this type of care – whether at home or in a facility – when the time comes.

The family of the Cochran Brothers:

*Karyl & Family*

Karyl W Cochran  
Gwynn Cochran Virostek  
Joan Elizabeth Cochran  
Georgia Cochran Jones  
Cay Cochran Ford  
Raymond “Ray” Chesser Cochran  
George Winn Cochran III

