

## **Steven Derrick Orr obituary**

Steven Derrick Orr, 86, died on August 26, 2026, in Jacksonville, Florida. He was born on February 11, 1940, in Joplin, Missouri to Charles and Janice (Mackinnon) Orr. Steven inherited a tradition of public service from his grandfather, Charles Thomas Orr, a Joplin-area zinc-mine operator, World War I adviser to the U.S. War Industries Board, and first president of Freeman General Hospital.

Steven spent six formative childhood years in postwar Japan, where his father, the Rev. Charles Thomas Orr Jr., served as a Methodist military chaplain during the American occupation. The experience shaped the international outlook that guided Steven's life of public service.

Steven served in the U.S. Air Force in Hawaii from 1957 to 1961, handling secure communications and classified conferences among senior commanders in Washington, Hawaii, and Asia. The experience helped prepare him for later work with the Peace Corps and USAID.

After attending the University of Missouri and studying for a year at the University of Madrid, Steven joined the Peace Corps in 1964 and served two years in Panama. There, he helped establish a vocational school that later became part of the University of Panama, launching a decades-long international-development career and friendships he cherished throughout his life.

In 1967, Steven joined the U.S. Agency for International Development, a division of the State Department. While training in Hawaii for service in Vietnam, he met his future wife, Maureen, a nurse preparing for the same mission. They subsequently served together in Nha Trang, where he worked in refugee resettlement.

Steven was seriously injured in Nha Trang by a clandestine bomb explosion, for which he was awarded the Purple Heart. Additionally, he was honored with an Agency for International Development service award for his actions that saved eight USAID colleagues and approximately a dozen Vietnamese employees. Both Steven and Maureen barely survived the harrowing Tet Offensive together, after which they were married on May 25, 1968, in Altoona, Pennsylvania.

Steven later served as a translator for the United Nations before returning with his young family to Arizona. As a health administrator for Planned Parenthood of Tucson, he worked to improve sexual and reproductive health education among at-risk young people. He subsequently moved his family to the White Mountain Apache Reservation, where he worked with the Tribe to improve health services for expectant mothers and reduce infant mortality.

Building on that success, Steven moved his family to Colombia. From 1978 to 1984, he managed USAID-funded health and family-planning programs in Latin America and the Caribbean, first from Bogotá and later from Miami. Despite frequent travel, he supported his sons as president of Miami Killian Senior High School's Band Parents Association.

Steven's later USAID work took him around the world. He helped negotiate the release of hostages, including himself, in El Salvador; establish broadcasting networks in Nepal; rebuild schools in Iraq; strengthen legal institutions in Afghanistan; and assess a management institute in Belarus. He also narrowly escaped a volcanic eruption in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Following the September 11 attacks, Steven volunteered with American Red Cross Disaster Services in New York. He managed a warehouse at Floyd Bennett Field and approximately \$6 million in supplies and a round-the-clock logistics staff that supplied food and refreshments to approximately 130 emergency-response vehicles serving Ground Zero and other affected communities.

Steven cofounded Returned Peace Corps Volunteer chapters in Miami and the First Coast, welcomed international visitors through GlobalJax, and was named a Jacksonville Volunteer of the Year. He also served on the board of the Foreign Service Retirees Association of Florida and wrote several books, including his memoir, "The Perennial Wanderer: An American in the World."

Steven is the husband of Maureen, brother of Charles Thomas "Tom" Orr III in Tucson (now deceased), father of two children, Sean C. Orr, MD and Brendan H. Orr (deceased in 2023), as well as father-in-law to Liliana. Additionally, he has 4 beloved grandchildren, Kevin, Francesca, Lukas and Chloe Eileen.

A memorial service will be held from noon to 2:00 pm on Saturday, September 19, 2026, at the Mandarin Community Club. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to Planned Parenthood of Florida or the National Peace Corps Association.

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