



Cliff Laughlin Captain USAF 1960-65 C-130 Pilot Vietnam

Born on Valentine Day, 14 Feb 1935, right behind the depression in a small town in Missouri, which was close to Ft Leonard Wood Army base. I spent most of my life growing up in the Peoria, Illinois area, graduating from high school in 1953, at the end of Korean War. Thought I was going to get drafted? Was active in sports, went to Illinois State Basketball Tournament as a junior, was selected to All-City team in senior year. Decided to enroll at Bradley University in 1956, and received a BS Business in 1960. Volunteered for Advanced AFROTC in last two years, so was also commissioned as 2Lt USAF upon graduation. Earned Private Pilot License in senior year, so was ordered to report for USAF flight training, class 62F, in summer 1960.

Completed primary flight training in T-34 and T-37 aircraft at Moody AFB, Georgia. We lost five pilots and three aircraft in one year, scary. Finally awarded my silver "wings" after completing advanced training in T-33, very honored. Then received orders to Sewart AFB, Tennessee to checkout in C-130, 4 engine turbo prop, same plane see at Minneapolis airport (Reserve, Guard). The C-130 was a comfortable aircraft but a lousy mission, which was world-wide, never home. I served 2 short terms (TDY) in Vietnam in 1964 and 65. What I remember most about Nam is transporting bombs into the war zone from Clark AFB, Philippines and then turning into a mercy flight bringing back KIA to military morgue at Clark, in preparation for their last flight home to USA for final burial rites. That's the reality of war, kill or be killed.

We signed up to serve 3 years after completing flight training, so my time was up in summer 1965. Had exit interview with Colonel to make decision to stay/leave? I knew would be heading back to Nam for 12 months unaccompanied duty. Told Colonel if he would grant me assignment to catch missiles with C-130 in Hawaii I would re-up. He gave me a fine lecture and told me to exit the premise.

Returned to Peoria with family (wife, 3 kids) to enroll in graduate school and received MS Technical Education in 1967. Worked in the manufacturing management arena for years with Allis Chalmers, International Harvester, White Motor and others. Was certified with (APICS) American Production Inventory Control Society, so began computer software consulting gig. This involved being on the road again (road warrior), traveling all over the world.

Finally retired, was always a DIY'er so spent spare time in my woodshop specializing in rehabbing wood furniture and creating cabin décor. Usually have a sale each summer, last few years have been up north where our son resides in Solon Springs, Wisconsin.

Married to Patt, who is a Registered Nurse that I met at the Methodist Hospital in Peoria, while working to earn school money. We have 2 sons (CFO, Hockey Coach UWS) and 2 daughters (teacher, nurse). Soon to have first great-grandchild? Will be celebrating our 60th anniversary in summer 2018, what a miracle.

Have been a member of the Lake Minnetonka VFW Post since 1997, serving as Commander for 5 years. Active member of the Excelsior Legion Post also, currently serving as Chaplain. Enjoy camaraderie with vets, especially on Memorial and Veterans Day ceremonies. Will always consider it as an honor, to participate in local military funerals. Was honored to ride in the corvette in the MHS parade and being selected to raise flag at one of the Twins games. That makes you proud to be a veteran.

Words of wisdom: Vets, rejoice in the Lord always. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength and then you will live forever. Be strong and courageous, be not afraid of terrorists, for the Lord your God goes with you. He will never leave or forsake you. He is our mighty warrior. Even to old age and grey hair, He will sustain and rescue us. Amen! The world is getting ready for conflict, but you veterans belong, stay strong, you are America.