

William Sibley Obituary



May 1, 1939 - December 26, 2020
Lieutenant Colonel Retired, U.S.A.F.
William "Bill" Harrison Sibley, 81, a resident most recently of Redlands, CA, passed away peacefully from complications of Alzheimer's on December 26, 2020. Lt. Col. W. H. Sibley was born on May 1, 1939 to Frank and Ione Sibley in Logansport, Indiana. He was the third born of four children, 2 brothers Jim and David, and sister Susan all of which preceded him in death. Lt. Col. Sibley grew up in Glenview, IL, but moved to Duluth,

MN and graduated from Duluth East High School in 1957 where he served as Class President. He was an exceptional leader and athlete, and was Quarterback and Captain of his high school football team, as well as Captain of his high school basketball team. He continued his education and love of athletics at the University of Minnesota, Duluth where he was involved in ROTC and earned a Bachelor of Science degree in 1963, majoring in Physical Education and a minoring in both History and Air Science. He also played on the UMD Basketball Team when he was an underclassman and was an assistant coach for the team his senior year. In 1976, he earned his Master's Degree in Education from Pepperdine University. After Lt. Col. Sibley's graduation from UMD in 1963, he began his 21-year military service career and attended Basic Navigator Training and Combat Aircrew Training at James Connally AFB in Texas where he was awarded the Silver Pilot's Wings. He was

reassigned to the Fairchild AFB in Washington, and was commissioned there in 1963. He navigated on refueling missions "passing gas" in support of initial U.S. involvement in South East Asia (Vietnam), and was a Navigator on RC-135 Aircraft where he was Chief of Operations. He provided precise in-flight corridor navigation on operational strategic reconnaissance missions vital to national security. Lt. Col. Sibley was a Master Navigator with over 5,100 hours of flying time, 3,100 of those hours were combat and combat support flying hours. He flew with the 92nd Air Refueling Squadron in Washington, the 55th Wing Strategic Reconnaissance Squadron (SSR) in Omaha, and the 82nd SRS in Okinawa. From 1970 until he was honorably discharged in 1984, he trained navigators in wartime environments, managed and trained Intelligence Officers and Airmen, wrote emergency war order plans for operational sorties, wrote, produced, and directed various audiovisual products for air crew trainings, and managed a staff of over 450 personnel, equipment, and facilities at 28 different locations. In 1978, he was USAF European Senior Doubles Tennis Champion and USAF European Senior Racquetball Championship Finalist. In 1980, was the Mojave Interservice Racquetball Tournament Senior Champion, in addition to being the Norton Air Force Base Senior Racquetball Champion and NAFB Singles Senior Tennis Runner-up. Lt. Col. Sibley lived all over the United States including Redlands and Riverside, CA, LaGrange IN, Omaha, NE, Bradenton, FL, Athens, Greece and Okinawa, Japan. He was the recipient of numerous awards and citations during his notable career, including two Distinguished Flying Cross, three Meritorious Service Medals, nine Air Medals, three Air Force Commendation Medals, three Presidential Unit Citations, four Outstanding Unit Awards, two Combat Readiness Medals, three Vietnam Service Medals, in addition to a National Defense Service Medal, an Air Force Longevity Award, an Air Force Expeditionary Medal, a Small Arms Expert Marksmanship Ribbon, a Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with Palm and a Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal. He was also awarded the U.S. Air Force Meritorious Morale Welfare

Recreation Award as Military Volunteer of the Year while in Europe in 1979. He consistently made significant contributions to his unit's missions, unit morale, and local community relations. His outstanding professional skill, knowledge, and leadership aided immeasurably in identifying problem areas in the field of aviation and in developing and implementing research projects capable of solving these problems. Lt. Col. Sibley was a brave and loyal navigator, leader and a faithful and loving father. He is remembered for his quick wit, creativity, and generosity towards everyone. He will always be his family's hero but was always so humble of his service and commendations. He would be the first to say, "All these medals are for Achievement not Valor. Our job was reconnaissance" but would conclude that statement with, my children and grandchildren are my "GREATEST Awards!" He spent his "retirement" years coaching, teaching PE, selling insurance, hunting with Tim, making "Sib-It" fishing lures, fishing 360 days a year with his dear Florida friends, and taking care of his beloved mom until her passing in 2002. Bill, "Billy Bob" Sibley, was a natural craftsman who had an inquisitive mind, and was always rigging up some new contraption to make hunting, fishing, and life in general better which even included cutting a new aluminum boat in half, just to make it lighter and easier to carry. He will be forever missed by his three children Ann (Dan) Cates, Eugene, OR, April (Gary) Mang, Greensburg, PA, and Tim (Pam) Sibley of Redlands, CA, in addition to his 9 grandchildren and 2 great grandchildren. Services will be private and his life will be celebrated by his family with Military Honors in Bradenton, Florida per his final wishes.