

## Taps

### Final Flight

**Major H. George Murphy, USAF (Ret.), 85**

September 11, 1934 – June 10, 2020



H. George Murphy passed away on Wednesday, June 10, 2020 at Westmont Village in Riverside, CA after a 12-year struggle with Dementia. He was 85 years old.

George was born on September 11, 1934 to Verda and Harold R. Murphy and raised in Venice, CA. He had 5 brothers and one sister, 4 of whom predeceased him. At the age of 15 he dropped out of High School and started his military career by joining the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve in March of 1950. In early July 1950, his unit was called to active duty. After 30 days of KP at Camp Pendleton, he was sent to radio operator school in San Diego, CA in August 1950. Upon completion, he was assigned to a Forward Air/Naval gun fire team in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division at Camp Le Jeune, NC.

When it was discovered he was under age (16) for active service, he was honorably discharged in February 1951. A year and a half later at age 17 he re-enlisted into the U.S. Air Force at March AF Base in Riverside, CA and was assigned to the 22<sup>nd</sup> Bomb Wing as an aircraft mechanic on Boeing B-29 bombers.

It was during this time he met, fell in love and married Patricia Camp. They raised 4 boys and a girl and traveled with him to his many PCS's. In June 1956, at age 21, he was selected to attend Officer Candidate School, as a "Mustang", a nickname given as it was the last class for enlisted personnel to be eligible. He was

commissioned and was accepted for pilot training, his life-long dream. He'd often say that after his first plane ride at age 5, he knew that someday he wanted to learn to fly.

During the summer and fall of 1958, he attended Advanced Pilot Training to fly the Boeing B-47 and Nuclear weapons delivery. Upon his return to March AFB, he was assigned frequent Alert Duty for a week at a time, in a secure facility at the end of the takeoff runway. In addition, he was assigned periodic month-long Alert Duty tours on the island of Guam.

In January 1963, he was assigned to the 55<sup>th</sup> Strategic Reconnaissance Wing (SAC) at Forbes AFB, Topeka, KS. There he was assigned to fly covert "Ferret" missions, gathering electronic data from Soviet-Bloc countries.

During an unescorted "Ferret" mission off the southern tip of Kamchatsky Peninsula, near Petropavlovsk, a MiG-25 attempted to force the aircraft to land. A collision was avoided, and they reversed course. A few minutes later the MiG-25 re-engaged, flying in close formation with their aircraft. They were able to take telephoto pictures revealing modifications of the MiG-25 not previously known. He and his crew received the DFC for their actions that day and for similar encounters.

After 15 years he left active service and joined an Air Force Reserve Search/Rescue Squadron and was hired by Continental Airlines to fly commercial jetliners. He flew Continental flights, taking troops to and from Vietnam. In his sparetime he mentored young people in the C.A.P. (Civil Air Patrol). At different times he owned several airplanes, a Cessna Sky Master, a Piper Aztec, a Piper Lance and was a co-owner of a Cessna 172.

He retired as a Major after 28 years of military service, having been awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Air Medal. And after 19 years flying with Continental Airlines, he retired. He was now living in El Paso, TX, where he changed careers and became a Certified Financial Planner.

After more than 35 years of his marriage with Pat, he sadly and broken heartedly lost her to breast cancer in August of 1988. Eventually he met Marie Ruff, who had been a widow for 14 years. They married in April 1990 and now had a wonderful combined family of 8 grown children.

Starting a new life together they relocated to Dayton, Ohio and opened an insurance office. However, business was not booming, so they closed the office and researched an area to retire. They wanted more time to travel and be involved in other activities. They chose a planned community on a lake in Salem, SC, built their home and had many years of enjoying life. George joined a Barbershop Quartet, sang in the church choir, learned to sail boats and joined a sailing club. In between time they traveled, visiting family and many faraway places, Antarctica being the farthest and their favorite. And then George's health started to fail. They found AFVW, a Continuing Care Facility (now Westmont Village) in Riverside, CA and moved there to be closer to family.

George had many interests and adventures in his life. His love of flying led him to enjoy not only his airplanes, but sports cars, motorboats and later 3 sail boats. He was a Lifetime member of Military Officers of America Association (MOAA) and a proud member of the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) Society.

He is survived by his wife, Marie, their combined family of 8 children, 15 grandchildren and 16 great-grandchildren who will sorely miss his smile, his adventures, his generosity, his larger-than-life presence and his most wonderful sense of humor. And like father and grandfather, son Jeff and grandsons, Adam and Erik have proudly made the USAF their career choice.

Interment with full military honors will take place at Riverside National Cemetery, Riverside, CA.



*George Murphy (2<sup>nd</sup> from left) with the crew of his RB-47 Stratojet.*



*USAF RB-47 Stratojet missions over and along the border of the Soviet Union were hazardous, and Soviet fighters damaged one reconnaissance Stratojet and shot down two, with the loss of seven USAF personnel killed and two temporarily imprisoned. Between 1947 and 1957, Boeing, Douglas and Lockheed built over 2,000 Stratojets. -National Museum of the USAF*