

LT. COL. Charles “Chuck” L. Miller, US Army Retired, passed away at Bella Vista Transitional Care Center on October 9, 2014 after a courageous battle against complications from three strokes.

The fifth of six children, Chuck was born in 1930 to the late Albert Miller and Josephine Hutchinson in a small logging camp in Sulphur Springs, Oregon. When Chuck was 14 his father passed away suddenly, leaving the two youngest children orphans.

In 1946 WW II was winding down and both Chuck and his younger brother wanted to join the Army Air Corps. On a trip to Salem, Oregon they talked to an Army Air Corps Recruiter who told them they and their 15 year old buddy could sign up if they could get a piece of paper signed by an adult saying they were all 18. The mother of their young sister-in-law was only too glad to oblige, and the Army Air Corps promptly inducted 16-year old Chuck, their 15-year old buddy and Chuck’s 14-year old brother George.

Chuck wanted to be an aircraft mechanic but was sent to Heavy Equipment Crane and Shovel School instead. He spent his first enlistment stationed at Harmon Field in Guam. During his first year in Guam, a Major General named William E. Farthing stopped and visited with the young man. Apparently impressed with Chuck’s “can do” attitude he put in orders promoting Chuck to “Buck Sergeant” 10 days before Chuck’s 17th birthday and 13 months after his enlistment date.

In 1951 Chuck joined the Paratroops and was part of the 82nd Airborne and later the 11th Airborne. Chuck earned his Senior Parachute wings after making 35 jumps. In 1954 he was accepted for OCS (Officers Candidate School) He had to “fess up” and admit his true age and discovered there were only two schools available – Infantry or Artillery. Chuck chose the Infantry because he knew Artillery had advanced math, but the military again knew best and put him into the Artillery School. Many long hours were spent in Study Hall every evening to keep up with the college graduates in his class, but he graduated as one of two in the top 5% of his 1953 class. The 5% ranking earned him the choice of going to the Corps of Engineers.

In 1957 Chuck was sent to Gary Air Force Base in San Marcos, Texas for primary flight training, and Fort Rucker, Alabama for Advanced fixed wing flight training. This was followed by flying helicopters, which he dearly loved, and earning a Master Aviator rating. He was assigned with the 30th Topographical Survey Team and was sent to Iran for a year mapping that country. He spent three years in Italy with the Mediterranean Engineer Division as a pilot and Civil Engineer flying to the Middle East, Africa and Burma.

Chuck completed two tours in Vietnam (1966-67 and 1970-71) with the 1st Air Cav Division and the 9th Air Cav Squadron. During his 1970-71 tour, Chuck was assigned as Airfield Commander of Marble Mountain, Da Nang, relieving the last US Marine Air unit based there. He ended his 24 year career in the US Army as the Regular Army Engineer Advisor to the California National Guard, based out of Santa Rosa and covering San Francisco north to the Oregon border.

His medals and awards include the Distinguished flying Cross, Bronze Star with 2 Oak Leaf Clusters, the Meritorious Service Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster, Air Medal with V for Valor and 10 Oak Leaf Clusters, Senior Parachute Wings, Master Aviator Wings (6000+ hours fixed wing, 2000+ rotary wing) Army Commendation Medal, Good Conduct Medal

with Oak Leaf Cluster, Atlantic Pacific Campaign, World War II Victory Medal, Army of Occupation Medal, National Defense Service Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster, Vietnam Service Medal with four Oak Leaf clusters, Armed Forces Reserve Medal, Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal, Republic of South Vietnam Cross of Gallantry Unit Citation with Palm, Republic of Vietnam Civil Action Unit Citation.

Following military retirement, Chuck became a Construction Superintendent for Dart Industries, flew for a regional airline, built custom homes in Camarillo, and was the City of Paso Robles' first full-time Airport Manager, best remembered for putting on Air Shows featuring the USAF Thunderbirds and the USN Blue Angels. After his retirement from the City of Paso Robles, Chuck and his wife moved to Central Oregon and continued their love for travel, returning back to Atascadero in the late 90's.

Chuck was a long time member of the Estrella Warbirds Museum, serving as President twice, The Atascadero Elks Lodge, MOAA, MOWW, and VUMS (Veterans of Underage Military Service)

Chuck is survived by his loving wife of 42 years, Elizabeth "Betty" Renton Miller, his two children by his first wife Bettye Fowler, son Charles L. "Chip" Miller, Jr. (Hilda) and daughter Mary Jayne "Jaynie" Miller. Chuck is the proud grandfather of Cayce McDonald (Jon) and Matthew Miller and great-grandfather of Kaili, Josh and Samantha McDonald. Also surviving Chuck is his sister, Donna Hutchinson Hoeffliger and brother, Dwayne Hutchinson (Betty Ann) and numerous nieces, nephews, cousins and many dear friends.

The family wishes to thank his devoted care givers, Kathleen and Kathy; Dr. Than Luu, MD; Dale Felker, RN; and the wonderful staffs at Bella Vista Transitional Care Center, Sierra Vista Hospital, Twin Cities Community Hospital and Wilshire Home Health Care for their loving care and comfort during Chucks last days.

A Celebration of Chucks Life will be held in Paso Robles at the Estrella Warbirds Museum at 2:00 pm on Sunday, November 9. In lieu of flowers donations may be sent in his name to the Estrella Warbirds Museum Aviation Scholarship Fund - 4251 Dry Creek Road, Paso Robles, CA 93446.

