

David Earl Russell, LTC, US Army (Retired)

August 31, 1940 - January 11, 2009

David Earl Russell, LTC, USA, Ret., of Annapolis, MD, passed away on Sunday, January 11, 2009, at Anne Arundel Medical Center, surrounded by his loving family and friends. Col. Russell was born in Los Angeles, CA on August 31, 1940 and was the son of the late John J. Russell and Oneida Lee (Favinger) Russell of Redding, CT.

LTC Russell was commissioned in 1964 as a Regular Army Second Lieutenant from Providence College where he was a Distinguished Military Graduate. LTC Russell's long and distinguished career included assignments as an Armor Company Commander in Germany, Senior Advisor to a Vietnamese Ranger Battalion, the Commander of A Troop, 3/17th Air Cavalry ("Silver Spurs"), and Secretary of the General Staff, 1st Aviation Brigade, Republic of Vietnam.

From 1973-1975, LTC Russell and his family were posted to the American Embassy in Vientiane, Laos where he was the Assistant Army Attaché, a diplomatic position. Following his return from Laos, LTC Russell served in a myriad of positions including: Commander, United States Army Special Research Detachment at the National Security Agency (NSA); Director, Department of Joint and Combined Operations, and Professor of Middle Eastern Studies – both at the US Army Command and General Staff College, Ft. Leavenworth, KS.

LTC Russell's military honors included the Distinguished Flying Cross, Air Medal with Combat "V" (22 awards), Bronze Star (4 awards), Meritorious Service Medal (4 awards), Master Army Aviator Wings, Parachute Badge, the Ranger Tab, and numerous other awards and decorations.

After retiring from the Army in 1984, LTC Russell co-founded American Flight Group, Inc., in Annapolis, Maryland, an executive aircraft charter airline. He later became the company's President and CEO as well as a chief pilot for the company, which operated through 2006. LTC Russell was qualified to fly aircraft ranging from attack helicopters to executive jets. During his 51-year military and civilian career, he logged over 20,000 flight hours.

LTC Russell earned his B.A. in Political Science from Providence College, his M.A. in Political Science (Arab World Studies) from the University of Rhode Island, and his M.S., in Naval Arts and Sciences, from the U.S. Naval War College in Newport, RI. He also attended the Defense Language Institute, Monterey, CA, where he studied Modern Standard Arabic and French.

LTC Russell had a great love and passion for aviation, opera, classical music, Broadway show tunes, sailing, the City of Annapolis, the Naval Academy Midshipman to whom he opened his heart and home, and most importantly, for his four children and the many people who called "the Colonel" their friend.

LTC Russell is survived by his daughter, Kimberlee Russell Fleming of Marathon, FL; his three sons, John D. Russell of St. Petersburg, FL, Colin F. Russell and Dennis C. Russell of Annapolis, MD; his sister, Jacqueline L. Russell of Redding CT; his aunt, Nancy Russell of Queens, NY; his sister-in-law, Marti Russell of Sterling Heights, MI; and numerous nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his brother Linwood Russell and his sisters, Deborah Russell and Teresa Russell Cavoretto.

Friends will be received at Fellows, Helfenbein and Newnam Cremation and Funeral Care, P.A., 814 Bestgate Road, Annapolis, MD 21401 on Thursday, January 15, 2009, from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated at St. John Neumann Catholic Church, 620 North Bestgate Road, Annapolis, MD 21401 on Friday, January 16, 2009, at 1:00 p.m.

A graveside service, with full military honors, will be held at Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington, VA, on Monday, April 13, 2009, at 11:00 a.m. Those wishing to attend are asked to assemble at the Cemetery Administration Building by 10:30 a.m. for transportation to the grave site.

Previous Events

Service

JAN 16. 1:00 PM (ET)

St. John Neumann Catholic Church
620 N. Bestgate Road
Annapolis, MD

Tribute Wall



“ *David Earl Russell, LTC, US Army (Retired)* ”

October 26, 2023 at 06:42 PM



“ *David Earl Russell, LTC, US Army (Retired)* ”

January 28, 2023 at 12:44 PM



“ *David Earl Russell, LTC, US Army (Retired)* ”

January 28, 2023 at 08:03 AM



“ On behalf of the entire Taylor Family, I wish to express our deepest sympathy and condolences to the family and friends of LTC Russell. You have been in our prayers. The world will miss a man of such high caliber. We thank him for his service to this nation. My late Brother Phil served with LTC Russell in A Troop 3/17th and is buried at Arlington.

I hope it's OK to add the lyrics from Trace Atkins "Arlington":

*I never thought that this is where I'd settle down.
I thought I'd die an old man back in my hometown.
They gave me this plot of land,
Me and some other men, for a job well done.*

*There's a big White House sits on a hill just up the road.
The man inside, he cried the day they brought me home.
They folded up a flag and told my Mom and Dad:
"We're proud of your son."*

*And I'm proud to be on this peaceful piece of property.
I'm on sacred ground and I'm in the best of company.
I'm thankful for those thankful for the things I've done.
I can rest in peace;
I'm one of the chosen ones:
I made it to Arlington.*

*I remember Daddy brought me here when I was eight.
We searched all day to find out where my grand-dad lay.
And when we finally found that cross,
He said: "Son, this is what it cost to keep us free."*

*Now here I am, a thousand stones away from him.
He recognized me on the first day I came in.
And it gave me a chill when he clicked his heels,
And saluted me.*

*And I'm proud to be on this peaceful piece of property.
I'm on sacred ground and I'm in the best of company.
I'm thankful for those thankful for the things I've done.
I can rest in peace;
I'm one of the chosen ones:
I made it to Arlington.*

*And everytime I hear twenty-one guns,
I know they brought another hero home to us.*

*And I'm proud to be on this peaceful piece of property.
I'm on sacred ground and I'm in the best of company.
We're thankful for those thankful for the things we've done.
We can rest in peace;
'Cause we are the chosen ones:
We made it to Arlington.*

*Yeah, dust to dust,
Don't cry for us:
We made it to Arlington.*

*I believe Phil will be there to greet his Brother, comrade and
commander. God bless you David.*

*Chris Taylor & Family###imported-begin##The Taylor
Family###imported-end##*

January 23, 2009 at 07:01 PM



“ *Dear Jackie and David's Family.
I was so sorry to learn from my Mother about David's death. Please
know that you all are in our thoughts and our prayers.
All my love,
Susan###imported-begin##Susan Closter-Godoy###imported-end##*

January 19, 2009 at 08:03 PM



“ I served with Major Russell at Quan Loi. He was a very brave and dedicated leader. I was Spur 39. You have my sincere condolences

No reply is necessary.##imported-begin##L Burwell "Pete"
Gunn##imported-end##

January 19, 2009 at 10:16 AM



“ My condolences and prayers to all of David's immediate family and loved ones and especially to Jackie.

I knew David as my best friend's (Terry)older brother and on rare occassion as a babysitter while I was growing up.

His life story is amazing and I see that his warm smile endured. He always had a warm and loving heart. I can only imagine how much he will be missed.

Blessings and prayers,

Sincerely,

Elaine Bisbee

(Dover-Foxcroft, Maine)##imported-begin##Elaine (Simard)

Bisbee##imported-end##

January 18, 2009 at 09:57 AM



“ Dear Russell Family, We are deeply moved by the news of COL David Russell's death. We have known David in the VN War nearly thirty eight years ago, and have enjoyed these many years of friendship. Once in 1971, our ARVN 3rd Armored Cavalry Brigade was surrounded by two NVA Infantry Divisions in the jungle of DAMBE (NE Cambodia). David Russell, then a Major, commanding A Troop, 3/17th Air Cavalry was DS to our brigade. With his courage, determination, and professionalism, he helped the cavalry brigade win the battle for DAMBE, and withdraw safely to South Vietnam. He saved many Vietnamese soldiers on the battlefield. He was respected and admired by every ARVN Cavalry officer who worked with him. We want you to know how deeply COL David Russell's loss is felt here. Each individual of the ARVN Cavalry Organization joins in this expression of our deep sympathy.
Very sincerely###imported-begin###KHOI QUANG TRAN###imported-end###

January 17, 2009 at 06:48 PM



“ I was the infantry platoon leader of Alpha Troop and relished the opportunity to serve under Colonel Russell. He was a rare man commanding an Air Cav Troop in a dangerous enterprise, and we were all grateful to have such a man of dignity, compassion, and composure for our Spur 6. As a young 1Lt., I was often invited to share in a late night whiskey with the Major in his hooch, and delighted in our discussions on history, and literature and the war. All of us in Alpha Troop remain proud of our service under this unique man, and our Troop's exceptionally high esprit, combativeness, and strength of character were a direct reflexion of our leader and we remain today, indebted to his memory and those of our fellow brothers! May they all rest in peace. Sincerely John Kelly, Spur 25###imported-begin###John Kelly###imported-end###

January 16, 2009 at 05:44 PM



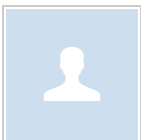
“ I was an original Silver Spur when A Troop, 3/17 Cavalry formed in 1966. I was privileged to serve under its first three commanders. David earned that command honor several years later, and I did not meet him until 2006. But it was immediately apparent to me that he upheld and carried on our Cavalry traditions of duty, honor, and excellence. I enjoyed our short acquaintence and I was shocked to learn of his sudden departure from us. But he is in a better place, and we will remember him whenever we Silver Spurs meet, in 2010 and thereafter. Eventually we shall see him again, but meanwhile he will be missed.##imported-begin##Charles E. Oualline##imported-end##

January 16, 2009 at 02:19 PM



“ To The Russell Family, I have never met LTC Russell, but reading his obituary in the newspaper certainly proved what a patriot he was. I thank you for his service to our country. You have my sincere sympathy on his passing. Warm regards, Anne Stewart, Annapolis##imported-begin##Anne Stewart##imported-end##

January 16, 2009 at 01:41 PM



“ I never served with David but we shared the horor of commanding Troop A, 3rd Sqn. 17th Air Cav. during a trying period of time in our nations histoy. As a past military officer and as one of the past members of Troop A, Silver Spurs, I share your loss. As a former copmmander and member of the Troop he will always be remered and honored at our gathering.##imported-begin##John Jenks##imported-end##

January 16, 2009 at 11:50 AM



“ We are very sorry for the loss of David, please accept our deepest condolences.##imported-begin##JAKE R. WEST JR.AND FAMILY##imported-end##

January 16, 2009 at 10:52 AM



“ I am very sorry to know that your father/sister has passed..I served with David in Vietnam 1970-71 at Quanloi and flew with him almost everyday. I had connected with him a cpl years ago and he asked me to come for a visit but because of not feeling as though I could afford the time off, put it off and now I will forever be saddend for not doing it. Your Dad always made me feel like we were equals even though I was only a E4 rank. I have many stories to share but this wouldn't be the time or place to do that. Please accept my deepest sentiments, David was a real cool guy. Dan Rhodes##imported-begin##Daniel Rhodes##imported-end##

January 16, 2009 at 09:59 AM



“ To the family of Col Russell,
I am truly sorry for your loss. I was very lucky to have known Col Russell for a short time while I attended the Naval Academy. I will always remember his kindness and generosity in opening up his home to me as a Midshipman.
My most sincere condolences,
ENS Emily Ansorge##imported-begin##Emily Ansorge##imported-end##

January 16, 2009 at 02:25 AM



“ Good night, sir. It was an honor serving under you. See you back at the hanger.##imported-begin##David Benny Bonello##imported-end##

January 15, 2009 at 06:57 PM



“ To Dave:
We and our families met during our diplomatic assignment in 1974 in the Kingdom of Laos. For the subsequent 35 years we all remained best of friends, celebrating birthdays and other anniversaries, as well as other good times together. We miss you, Dave. You'll forever be in our thoughts as we tell stories from 'back in the day'.##imported-begin##Leonard Wood and Family##imported-end##

January 15, 2009 at 02:08 PM



“ We were very sad to hear of your loss. Mr. Russell was a treasured customer. We enjoyed him when he stopped in. Please accept our sincere condolences for your loss.
Staff of Chesapeake Auto Body, Inc.
Will & Patti Kelly##imported-begin##Chesapeake Auto Body, Inc.##imported-end##

January 15, 2009 at 10:49 AM



“ I would like to express my deep sympathy to the Russell family. David was a very special person in so many ways. He will be deeply missed and I hope the many many happy memories of David will comfort his family and all those who knew and loved him.

Warmest regards,

Mary###imported-begin##Mary Irace###imported-end##

January 15, 2009 at 08:45 AM



“ I wish to express my sympathy to all of the Russell family. David was my brother-in-law and, over 30 years ago--seems like yesterday--, we spent great times with David and his family when they lived in Jamestown, RI. I will always remember his warm friendship and hospitality, his quick wit and impish smile, and his wicked (but accurate) insights into institutional, national and global politics. My heart goes out to all of you and a special hug for Kim and John David.

With deepest sympathy, Bob Baker###imported-begin##Bob Baker###imported-end##

January 14, 2009 at 09:57 PM



“ Dave had the honor and privilege of commanding one of the finest combat units of the past half century, the Silver Spurs, and he did so with distinction. Many of us did not have the good fortune to know him until three or four years ago when he attended his, and our, reunion in Dothan, Alabama. We immediately bonded. Sadly, that association has been cut far too short by his untimely departure. Fortunately, someday we shall ride again - together.

Nathan M. Pulliam

COL, US Army, Retired

The Original Silver Spur 6##imported-begin##Nathan M. Pulliam##imported-end##

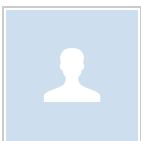
January 14, 2009 at 07:45 PM



“ David was a kind and caring friend and he will be missed.

Esther##imported-begin##Esther Levy##imported-end##

January 14, 2009 at 07:30 PM



“ Dear Russell family,

I did not know David personally, but through my sister Betsey Sanpere I felt like he was a part of our family. My sincerest condolences at this very difficult time to all of you. He was a fine man, a loving father, brother, and friend.

Best to all of you,

Greta Miner##imported-begin##Greta Miner##imported-end##

January 14, 2009 at 04:06 PM



“ To the Russell family we extend our deepest sympathy upon your loss. We became acquainted with David through his little sister, COL Jackie Russell, when our son Matt entered the Naval Academy. David was a friend to many a Midshipman and for that we say thank you. I always enjoyed talking to David about the 3/17 Cav - I am especially impressed with reading the comments from those who served with him in Vietnam. Job well done, be thou at peace.##imported-begin##Ann & Mike Swezey##imported-end##

January 14, 2009 at 03:17 PM



“ I will always remember David as the perfect gentlemen dressed in white tie and tails for the National Symphony Ball (see photo in photo album). Will miss our talks about world affairs, listening to Puccini, walks at Greenberry Point and cook-outs on our decks. You met people, David, and they became your friends and you do have so many friends.
You will be missed.
Rita##imported-begin##Rita Waldack##imported-end##

January 14, 2009 at 11:35 AM



“ Our family's condolences go out to all who knew, served with and loved this man.
I had the privilege to serve as David's Cobra Platoon Commander in RVN where he commanded A Troop, 3/17 Cavalry. He was a wonderful, principled, and supportive commanding officer. He was admired by everyone in our Troop as we fought that war on a daily basis.
The Nation has lost one of her best sons, but is better for the continuance of all he touched.
The Seidels
Spur36 1970-71 RVN###imported-begin##Al Seidel###imported-end##

January 14, 2009 at 08:18 AM



“ We are so very sorry for your loss. Please accept our sincere condolences.

Joe & Kathy McGlinn###imported-begin##Joe & Kathy McGlinn###imported-end##

January 14, 2009 at 07:52 AM



“ I would like to add my sincere condolences and thoughts for the Russell family. David was my commander in A troop 3/17 during 1971 at Quan Loi.

He was the epitome of a leader. I will always remember his ability to listen, allow and trust his aircraft commanders in their tactical decision-making.

He was particularly supportive and protective of all his troopers. David fostered an attitude of “team” which unified aviators, crewmembers, infantry and support personnel into one of the most effective, if not the best, air cavalry unit of the Vietnam Conflict.

Knowing him, working with him and having him as my leader, became the inspiration for me to become a career Army Aviation officer; establishing my future for the next 40 years of Army Aviation service. I owe much to David for leading the way!

CW5 Mike Billow

Silver Spur 38

70-71###imported-begin##CW5 Mike Billow###imported-end##

January 13, 2009 at 09:50 PM



“ I am so sorry for your loss. Anyone could see that he was a truly special man. My heart and thoughts are with you.###imported-begin##Whitney Fisler###imported-end##

January 13, 2009 at 08:12 PM



“ *Our heartfelt condolences and prayers to the entire Russell family. May our Lord bring you comfort during this difficult time.*

As a fellow Silver Spur from Vietnam, we are saddened that we have lost another Brother, especially one of our former troop commanders.

We were fortunate to see David again at our 2004 & 2008 A Troop, 3/17th Air Cavalry reunions.

Blue skies David

Roger & Pam Young##imported-begin##The Young Family##imported-end##

January 13, 2009 at 03:42 PM



“ Dear Russell Family,

Please accept our sincere thoughts and prayers on the passing of Col. Russell. We wish you ease and comfort in this difficult time.

A Short Poem

I am standing upon the seashore. A ship at my side spreads her white sails in the morning breeze and starts for the blue ocean. She is an object of beauty and strength and I stand and watch her until at length she is only a ribbon of white cloud just where the sea and sky come to mingle with each other. Then someone at my side says, "There! she is gone!" "Gone where? Gone from my sight---that is all. She is just as large in mast and hull and spar as she was when she left my side, and just as able to bear her load of living freight to the place of her destination. Her diminished size is in me, not in her and just at the moment when someone at my side says, "There! She is gone!" there are other voices ready to take up the glad shout, "There! She comes!"###imported-begin##The Katz Family##imported-end##

January 13, 2009 at 02:49 PM