

Misty 2, BILL DOUGLASS



Name: William Wilson Douglass, Jr.

Nickname: Bill

Highest Military Grade held: Lt. Col., 05

Home Town: Colorado Springs, CO

Regrettably, a biography on Bill Douglass, Misty 2, is not available.

The following portions of two eulogies that were written and delivered at Bill's memorial service by fellow Misty, Don Shepperd, and Bill's friend, David Weddle, are provided in lieu of a biography.

Bill Douglass' Memorial Service 31 March 2012, Monument, Colorado

Bill's Eulogy by Don Shepperd, Maj Gen, USAF (ret) and Misty 34:

Bill would have hated this. I can hear him now, "Ah come on now, don't get all teary-eyed and start saying nice things about me. I'm no big deal...just a farm boy who liked to fly airplanes. For gosh sakes, talk about Bud Day and Bob Craner and Guy Gruters and Howard Williams and Dick Rutan and P.K. Robinson Those guys are real heroes."

You see, if you knew him Bill always talked about others and how great they were, never himself. He always deflected attention away from himself and thus you knew little about him. Did you know:

- he was from New Hampshire – a Yankee
- he was a kid who flew airplanes off his barn and crashed most of them
- Bowdoin College – a liberal arts school for gosh sakes. "Liberal" is an oxymoron when applied to Bill. OK, he was on the science track
- 32 years as a confirmed bachelor until Jackie found him in a weakened condition in a military hospital
- three tours in Vietnam, the last in the F-105
- during the first tour he was shot, through the ankle, a year under medical care, many bone and skin grafts.

I asked him once, "So, how was it, getting shot through the ankle?" He replied, "Well there's lots worse places to get hit." – typical Bill, deflecting attention from himself and turning the serious into self-deprecating humor.

He was Misty 2, right behind Bud Day and then Misty 1 for a few hours after Bud was shot down and captured. This was the way most of us knew him but most of you don't understand what he did for us – read our books, read his stories and you will see the “real” Bill Douglas, still limping from his first tour but covering it up – taking on the simple task given to Misty:

“STOP THE TRAFFIC COMING DOWN THE HO CHI MINH TRAIL THROUGH ROUTE PACK 1 IN SOUTHERN NORTH VIETNAM BECAUSE WE WEREN'T ALLOWED TO STOP IT UP NORTH”

And Bill dug in. He didn't know how to do it and neither did others. He flew at low level through flak and gunfire and hunted missile sites and trucks and POL with no knowledge in old, tired and dangerous airplanes, no chaff, no flares, no ECM, no RHAW gear, no tactics, no clue. Bill and the early Mistys designed the tactics and procedures that allowed the rest of us to survive and be effective – many of us in this room are probably alive today because of Bill Douglass and what he did. Thank you, Bill, THANK YOU!

And then there was Jackie and I can hear him again, “Oh, Geeze now, don't get all teary-eyed saying nice things about Jackie. She'll be fine.” And she will. Jackie, Bill adored you. Being a guy's guy, he probably didn't say it enough but you were the light of his life. He was so proud of you. I'm sure being married to Bill was a wild carnival ride, but he really did adore you and so do we. We are all fortunate to have known you both.

.... In the distance there was a gleam on the horizon. Bill started walking towards it, then he began to jog. His ankle didn't bother him anymore and he breathed easily with his new lungs. As he came closer he saw it was an F-100 – A CLEAN F-100! no camouflage, no tanks, no rocket pods, no backseat and he climbed in. His parachute was already there and he strapped in and gave the run-up sign. The MA-2 “Duece” huffed to life and he pushed the starter button. As the RPM passed 15% he brought the throttle around the horn and the engine roared to life. He signaled for the chocks to be pulled and taxied on to the runway. He ran the engine up, released brakes and moved the throttle outboards into afterburner. There was a kick in the back and he was airborne and he climbed...and climbed...and climbed. Every time the fuel gauge started to deplete, it filled-up again...and there was no tanker and no probe and no drogue and he just flew...and flew...and flew – and as High Flight says, he “...chased the shouting wind along...and flung his eager craft through footless halls of air...” and flew and flew, and flew some more. Late in the afternoon he got tired and pulled the power back, put the gear down and squeaked the tires onto the runway in a perfect landing, good chute, taxied in and shut down. No 781 to fill out, no maintenance or Intell debriefs, but he heard music and singing coming from a nearby building. He pushed through the door and there were his old Misty buddies, drinking beer and laughing. There was Bob Craner and Glenn Jones and Chuck Turner and Howard Williams and Mike McElhanon and John Overlock and many others from his flying days. They were all there and I guess so will be we – those of us who make it through the waiver process. (*Abbreviated. See bottom of this webpage for full version*)

Another Eulogy was given by David Weddle, Professor of Religion, The Colorado College :

Born in New Hampshire, Bill Douglass was of sturdy New England stock: proudly independent, but helpful and generous. Despite decades of living throughout the United States, his voice sometimes carried a faint accent of the Northeast, especially when he was excited about a new project or the latest outrage by Democrats. When you grow up in a state with the motto, “Live free or die,” it is not surprising if you develop a bit of an edge: an attitude of defiance, a spirit of liberty, a taste for adventure. So, after attending Bowdoin College for a while, Bill joined the Air Force at age nineteen.

At the time, as he would say later, he was attracted above all by the ideal of service, the honor of earning his wings, and the thrill of being at the controls of a jet fighter. He flew fighters out of the RAF base in Lakenheath, England, where he was known as much for his exuberant spirits as his flying skills. If anyone ever lived life abundantly, it was Bill Douglass. He was the sort of person of whom it can be well said: "Ever he sought the best, ever he found it."

Flying about ten stories above the jungle during his first tour of duty in Viet Nam, his airplane, in Bill's words, "got ventilated with about 25 holes," then he added almost as an afterthought, "and I got ventilated also." He managed to land with a shaken South Vietnamese observer in the back seat; then he spent months recovering in the hospital. But he didn't just leave it at that, take his Purple Heart, and go home. Instead, after his release, he signed up for another tour of duty, this time not only as an observer of enemy positions but also as an aggressive attacker of hidden gun sites. When he arrived in Vietnam for his second tour of duty, Bill became second in command of a brave, skilled, intrepid, and slightly crazy set of pilots that comprised the Fast Forward Air Controllers called "Misty" for the favorite song of their commander, Bud Day, who later wrote, "Bill Douglass was a dynamo; nothing was too difficult." As Bill put it, "we concentrated on the AAA order of battle." Later he flew F-105s or "Thuds" over North Vietnam with the same focused courage. In his contribution to the published collection of Misty stories, Bill wrote, "I am eternally proud of the fact that I have witnessed the heroic actions of American aviators. I have traveled in the company of courageous men." He retired from the US Air Force as a Lieutenant Colonel in 1974.

After military service, he graduated from the University of Albuquerque with honors and later took a course in Chemistry at Cornell College to strengthen his credentials as a nuclear power plant operator at Duane Arnold Energy Center in Cedar Rapids. Folks there remember Bill as an effective and sensitive manager.

Bill retired a second time in 1997 as Director of Fossil Generation at Iowa Electric Utilities. He and Jackie moved to Colorado Springs within view of Pike's Peak, whose beauty he found inspiring. Bill was an avid skier and golfer and loved to be out of doors, feeling his spirit expand at the spectacle of nature and the wind blowing through those white, curly locks. He once said that his religion was a profound reverence for nature and the humbling effect of its magnitude and magnificence. Henceforth when I see a white-capped mountain range, a rich green stand of Iowa corn, the rainbow hues of a southwestern desert, or the ocean tide breaking on the rocks of New England, I will think of the adventurous traveler, our friend, Bill Douglass.

Among the military awards Bill received for his service were two Silver Stars, two Distinguished Flying Crosses, a Bronze Star, an Air Medal with twenty-four Oak Leaf Clusters, and the Purple Heart. Bill was a brave warrior and dedicated patriot, and it is fitting that he will rest in the hallowed ground of Arlington National Cemetery.

.... E-mails and cards from friends of Bill and Jackie carried two images with which we might end: a glide path to a smooth landing and "flying West" into the sunset. I choose the latter: a soaring into the red and golden sky, afterburners aglow, on a continuing journey toward the final freedom of an undaunted spirit. I think of Bill as on an endless ascent with angels as wing men, fuel tanks that never run dry, no canopy or helmet and—blessed relief!—no oxygen tanks. There is just the wind rushing through the cockpit like the Spirit that blows as it will, bearing our friend, warrior and hero, into the next adventure. God speed, Bill Douglass!

The above condensations of the two amazing tributes to Bill Douglass are available in their full versions.

Don Shepperd's: http://www.mistyvietnam.com/Bill_Douglass_Eulogy1.docx and

Professor David Weddle's: http://www.mistyvietnam.com/Bill_Douglass_Eulogy2.docx