

Lt. Col. Ed W. Graham – USMC

Feb 17, 1933 – Aug 31, 2006



As often happens in similar situations, Ed Graham passed away only 16 months after the passing of Babs, his beloved wife of 50 years. Thankfully, his passing was peaceful and easy. Although in apparently good health he was found in his favorite chair with ESPN on TV and the sports page in his lap with no obvious signs of distress.

Ed was the youngest of seven children born to Ed and Mamie Graham on an East Texas farm house with no indoor plumbing or electricity. To distinguish him from his namesake, as a child he was affectionately known as “Bo” or Wendell. Bethel, Texas was a small community just outside of Athens, which was to be his home until his enlistment as a Naval Aviation Cadet in 1953. He is survived by his brothers Buck and Ralph, and his sisters Skeet Cave and Loma Ray Chandler.

In addition, he is survived by his only son and daughter, Rodney Graham and Michele Fraser, along with his grandchildren: Nikki, Michael and Ashley Graham; Daniel and Torrey Masters; and Chelsea Fraser.

Barbara “Babs” Broom lived in nearby Athens where mutual friends arranged a blind date between her and Ed, in which she promptly stood him up. Well, Ed was never one to take this kind of thing lying down and sought her out to find out why she didn’t want to go out with him. The rest is, as they say, history and they were later married at The Station Chapel, MCAS, El Toro, CA on Dec 10, 1954.

After a short time spent in California, Ed received his orders to report to Kaneohe Bay, HI. Well the charm and romance of the islands worked their magic, since Rodney Ed (Apr 25, 1956) and Rita Michele (May 5, 1957) soon followed their parent's arrival in paradise.

After Hawaii, at the behest of the Marine Corps, relocations with the family to Texas, North Carolina, Mississippi, and California followed. Included during his 23 years of service were duty tours in Pensacola, FL; Corpus Christi, TX; Okinawa, Japan; Cherry Point, NC; El Toro, CA; Santa Ana, CA; Vietnam; and NAS North Island, CA.

Among his awards and medals were the Distinguished Flying Cross, Bronze Star with "V", and Purple Heart. However he was never one to talk much about his military service. In fact, other than his Purple Heart, those closest to him would be hard pressed to name one other medal prior to his eulogy. There is no doubt that a warrior spirit lived within him, however he rarely felt the need to articulate it.

After his retirement from the Marine Corps in 1976 he enjoyed two additional careers in real-estate and selling insurance with Prudential. In 1996, Ed and Babs moved to Prescott, AZ where they began their "official" retirement.

While being a Marine was an undeniable part of his fiber it didn't totally define him. This was most clearly observed when he became a grandparent. The tough guy that his children knew growing up became a pushover with his 6 grandchildren. He would think nothing of making the 12 hour round trip from Arizona to California to pick up one of his grandkids for the weekend. Although, as big of a softy that he became, no one that ever got in a car with him ever doubted that he was once a combat pilot.

Ed loved playing games – golf, cards, dominoes, scrabble, racquetball, you name it. He was fiercely competitive (even with his grandkids!) and to beat dad or granddad at anything was something to talk about. He loved the Dallas Cowboys (long before everybody started hating them) and his adopted Phoenix Suns. He loved John Wayne movies, In & Out Burgers, and Louie L'Amour books.

He also loved people and was never reluctant to strike up a conversation with anyone he had just met, and he never failed to make an impression. No one ever accused him of being a wallflower.

Perhaps his greatest passion was his devotion to God. He was an avid Bible student and rarely missed church services or an opportunity to talk to others about his faith.

Of the many condolences received, perhaps the most fitting of his person and character was, "He was a warrior for his country and a warrior for Christ". A more noble sentiment would be difficult to express.

He is deeply missed.