

LtCol DENNIS FENDELANDER USAF (Ret)



The Wing Association has been notified of the death of LtCol Dennis Fendelander. Former member of the 146th Airlift Wing, 115th Airlift Squadron.

Dennis passed away on the 13th of December 2018 after a long fight with Leukemia. He had a long and distinguished career in, both military and civilian aviation, during which, Dennis was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, Air Force Commendation Medal, and Air Medal with 9 Oak Leaf Clusters

The Fendelander family had a private funeral and has planned a Celebration of Life. Dennis is survived by his wife, Somchit, two sons, Donald and James, and daughter Lisa.

The service will be at 1100 on Saturday the 2nd of February
St. Julie Billiard Catholic Church, Parish Hall
2475 Borchard Road
Newbury Park, CA
805.498.3602
<https://stjulieschurch.org/>

Dennis was born in Paterson, NJ and grew up in Monmouth Beach, a small town on the Jersey Shore. He attended the Red Bank Catholic High School. The nuns were tough, strict and they emphasized integrity and responsibility. They were dedicated teachers and were devoted to educating while instilling a code of ethics.

He was accepted and entered the Air Force Academy in 1959, at the age of 17. Dennis graduated from the Academy in 1963 and was assigned to Undergraduate Pilot Training at Webb AFB in Texas. Training included aeronautical instruction and flight in the T-37 and T-38, primary and advanced trainers. His first operational assignment was to the C-130A at Lockbourne AFB, where he flew airlift missions throughout the world. His most memorable missions were a mass airdrop/air land into the Dominican Republic in 1965 and flights into Warsaw, Tehran, Chad, and many flights into Berlin through the Corridor.

He volunteered for Viet Nam and was soon flying the "A" from Okinawa into Thailand and Viet Nam for 1 ½ years. In 1966 he flew in Operation Junction City the largest airdrop in the War. Results were less than satisfactory and mass airdrops were never tried again. For 9 months he flew "Blind Bat" missions out of Ubon. These were night missions dropping flares and directing fighter strikes over the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

This apparently was not exciting enough as he volunteered to fly as a Forward Air Controller. Soon he was off to Hurlburt to check out in the 0-1 Bird Dog. Orders were changed and he found himself at Phan Rang learning to fly the 0-2 Super Skymaster prior to reporting for duty at Nakhon Phanom where he flew day time missions directing fighter strikes over the Ho Chi Minh

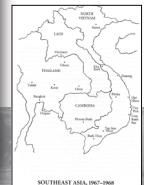
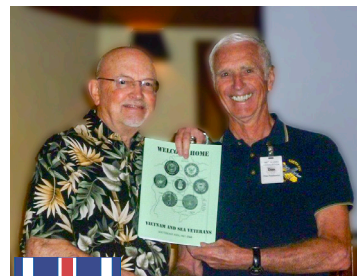
Trail. From there he was reassigned to Da Nang and Bien Hoa flying "Sleepytime" night missions trying to stop rocket attacks on Saigon and Bien Hoa.

Denny resigned from the Air Force in 1969 and was soon hired by United Airlines. He joined the Air Force Reserve at Willow Grove where he checked out in the C-130E. When United based him in Los Angeles in 1980 he transferred into the 115th AS at Van Nuys, CA. Dennis eventually became the Director of Training for 146th Tactical Airlift Wing. During his time with the 115th, he had the opportunity to fly on a Volant Oak rotation to Panama which expanded into "Operation Just Cause" This reminded him of his tours in Vietnam.

"...It was like being in Vietnam again, shuttling combat troops, howitzers and other equipment. The main hazards this time were friendly fire and risk of night midair collisions with aircraft flying with their lights off. Controllers were sometimes overloaded with aircraft arriving at Howard AFB. I talked with the NCO who was the Air Force Combat Control Team Leader and the first one out of the airplane on the night airdrop over the Panama Airport. He had to go out and find units who were dropped in tall grass and had no idea of which way to go..."

I retired from the Air Guard in November of 1990 with the rank of Lt Col. I had the pleasure of flying with many great crewmembers. I also flew with many veterans during my career at United. We often discovered we participated in some of the same military operations. One barely survived as a young marine in Khe Sanh, another a A-1 pilot who bailed out and got rescued off the coast of Vietnam, another a C-141 pilot who flew the night SKE airdrop over Panama Airport, and another the Commander of Special Ops for operation "Just Cause" just to mention a few. We all had a special bond.

Dennis retired, at age 60, from United Airlines in 2002 as a Captain on the B-777. The end of a long career for a great husband, father, aviator and warrior.



Dennis, back row and 3rd from left, and C-130 crew in SEA/Vietnam

