

AVIATION WALL OF HONOR

Capt. Dennis McCarthy Fighter Pilot USAF Vietnam



Dennis McCarthy, son of Vincent B. McCarthy (deceased) and Mrs. Ernestine M. McCarthy (Versailles) was born in Marquette August 9, 1944. Early schooling in this area was interrupted when his father had a job transfer to St. Ignace while employed by the Soo Line Railroad. However, enrollment at Northern Michigan University brought him back and in 1967 he was graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Marketing.

In December he enlisted in the United States Air Force and was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant in March 1968 following his completion of Officer Training School at Lackland AFB, San Antonio, TX. He began his USAF Pilot School training in April 1968 at Laughlin AFB, Del Rio, TX and was granted his "Wings" in April 1969. Because of his high ranking he was awarded the opportunity to fly the F-4 Phantom, the top fighter aircraft of its time. He began his Phantom training in July 1969 at George AFB, CA and upon completion was assigned to DaNang AB, South Vietnam for his first combat tour "in country." During this tour he flew 236 combat missions including "close air support" sorties to support our ground troops when

AVIATION WALL OF HONOR

they were endangered by enemy soldiers, interdiction missions on the Ho Chi Minh trail, as well as several low level visual reconnaissance sorties as a “stormy” fast moving Forward Air Controller (FAC) in some of the most heavily defended areas of Southeast Asia (SEA). During this year Dennis was awarded his first Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) and 18 Air Medals. His DFC was awarded for “flying a close air support mission, while destroying a hostile gun emplacement in spite of intense ground fire and adverse weather conditions.” Lt. McCarthy delivered his ordnance precisely on target allowing friendly forces to occupy the area without sustaining casualties. Upon return to the United States in March 1971 Dennis was assigned to the 308th Tactical Fighter Squadron (TFS) at Homestead AFB, FL.

After enjoying a relatively calm year flying “stateside combat training” missions Dennis’s Squadron was deployed to Udon AB, Thailand in April 1972. The Squadron, 24 F-4E Phantoms from Homestead AFB, FL flew to Thailand in three days while refueling enroute. The deployment was necessary to bolster the increased bombing of North Vietnam as the United States began to intensify the efforts to end the several years long war. The 308th TFS stayed in Thailand for four months. During that time Dennis completed an additional 75 combat missions, nearly all of them into North Vietnam, which by then had become the most heavily defended area in the history of aerial warfare.

During his second tour Dennis received his second Distinguished Flying Cross and an additional 5 Air Medals. His DFC was awarded for his “efforts as the flight leader of four Phantoms in the rescue of a downed aircrew deep into North Vietnam.” Their flight was responsible for keeping enemy aircraft from attacking the rescue efforts of the “Huey helicopters” while they were able to get to the downed pilots and rescue them. Following the

AVIATION WALL OF HONOR

Squadron's return to Florida in July 1972 Dennis continued to fly "peace time" combat missions until he resigned his USAF commission in December 1973.

Following his military career he enjoyed working with Johnson and Johnson in their Vision Care Division. In 1987 his team introduced the world's first disposable contact lens, Acuvue. He spent nearly 10 years traveling to more than 70 countries introducing and marketing Acuvue. When he retired in April 2004, he was Vice President of Worldwide marketing.

Dennis today resides in Ponte Verda Beach, FL with his wife Karin, their son Kevin who is a senior at Florida State University, and their daughter Louise who is a sophomore at Colorado State University.

Despite living in Florida, Dennis manages to get back to the Upper Peninsula at least once a year to see his mother, his sister Diane Walker and her husband Ron who live in the area.

TJ Mudge, June 2007

