

MICHAEL "Mike" EDWARD SCHAFERNOCKER

Mike, was the first son born to Dorothy & Jack Schafernocker Feb 28, 1949. He was born in Canton, Ohio but we moved to Arlington, Texas when he was 6 years old.

He went to C.B. Berry School thru the 6th grade then he went to J.C. Ferguson Jr. High, 7th 8th & 9th grades, then he went to Sam Houston High School his 10th 11th & 12th grades, graduating in 1967.

He then joined the Navy in 1967 and took his Boot training in San Diego, California. From there he went to N.A.S. Jacksonville, Florida where he went thru A.O. School (Aviation Ordinance)

From there he went to several other training camps to prepare him for survival in Vietnam.

He played piano and then learned Trombone in High School. He played in the school Marching band, the Orchestra and also in a Swing Band. He was invited to play with the Greater Ft. Worth's Lion's Club Band who were the official band for the Dallas Cowboys, when they played in Dallas.

When Mike went to San Diego he played Bugle in the Drum & Bugle Corp. Mike got to Vietnam about July 1968 and became a Duty Driver for a Navy Chief...Vern Eaton...he later volunteered to be a Door Gunner on a Navy Helicopter with the " Seawolves ". It was the only land-based Helicopter Unit in Vietnam and it was put together in Vietnam by the C.I.A. in Vietnam and later de-commissioned at the end of the War by the C.I.A.

The " Seawolves " patrolled the Mekong Delta and flew cover for the P.B.R's (Patrol Boat Rivers) also for the Navy " Special Forces " and the Navy " Seals ". They worked in conjunction with the Marine & Army Helicopter Units.

Mike's chopper was shot down April 28, 1969 over Cambodia. It took a direct hit from Automatic weapons from a Viet Cong hiding in Cambodia. (we weren't supposed to be in Cambodia but neither was the Viet Cong)

The site was just a few clicks inside Cambodia and not far from Moc Hoa, the last place Mike was Stationed.

The chopper dropped like a rock the exploded and burned on impact. The lead chopper did a U-turn to try and help but it was also hit but was able to " feather down ".

Mike was seen standing on the skids and his body was seen swinging down under the chopper when it fell. The survivor who saw it, told me later that he felt that Mike was already dead from the first shelling.

Mike was tied to the chopper by a " monkey belt ". (safety belt)

An Army Helicopter piloted by Dennis Innazzio, flew in to pick up the survivors...against orders...and later was charged with disobeying orders. They said it was too dangerous. Charges were later dropped. He actually got 6 men out. THANK " GOD " FOR MEN LIKE DENNIS!

Dennis and his crew are definitely Hero's. There were actually 5 men in the lead chopper. Usually there are only 4...a Pilot, Co-pilot and 2 Door Gunners. On this trip they had a 5th person, an observer. The Pilot was killed getting on board the rescue chopper and Mike's other Door Gunner...George Page...died 6 weeks later.

Mike's pilot...Dick Reardon and Co-Pilot....Hal Castle and Mike all died at the scene, and were buried there in Cambodia.

We could only have a Memorial Service for Mike as the U.S.A. was not allowed inside Cambodia till 8 months later...December 1969 when a Viet Cong surrendered and led a group of " Beach Jumpers " to where Mike & his Pilot and Co-Pilot were buried.

2 months later the Navy sent us a casket and told us it was our Son, but we were not allowed to open it as we were told"it was only a small bag of bones". Also that was before we knew about DNA.

The very weekend of Mike's 21st Birthday, we received his casket and we had it buried in Moore Gardens in Arlington, Texas.

Then 20 years later a " Beach Jumper ", Charles Mouzakis...from Houston, Texas contacted me and gave me a full report and pictures of exactly where Mike and his crew had been buried.

Our Government at that time paid for any information when anyone had surrendered and could lead them to any Captives, Bodies or Equipment. It was Charles "s job to distribute the Surrender notes and to play "Spook" tapes. Then he had to check their stories out.

Charles told me that he and his men actually "cheered" when they found bone fragments and 3 sets of teeth, as they knew they could make positive identification. Imagine...it took 20 years for us to know for certain that the bones we buried was actually our Son! ANOTHER "GOD" MIRACLE!

Mike was never married. He loved the " Canoe Club " but he said he was thinking about becomming a Unity Minister but I think he would have been a wonderful Chaplain!

Mike wrote a lot of poetry starting in High School. 3 of his poems were read at his Memorial Service. They are: " Make it Loyal " "Win or Lose " and " Peace ".

20 years later (1989) I had met a Navy " Seawolf " and he in turn had put my name on their mailing list. I found out that they were going to have their 2nd Reunion in Pensacola, Florida and I felt I needed to go. My other Son, Ronnie & I went and we actually met 14 guys who actually knew Mike in Vietnam. What a Blessing!

When I decided to go, I pulled all the boxes of Mike's personal things from the closet (where they had remained for 20 years) and I wanted to put all his pictures from Vietnam and poems in an Album. It was then that I found his poem " Look, God " that he had written just before he died.

Like I said before, " GOD " works in mysterious ways and in Divine Timing. Apparently, I just wasn't ready for it till then. What a wonderful Blessing and healing for us and for those who I have shared it with!

November 11th 1994 Mike's picture was selected as one of 44 pictures from all over the U.S.A....some dead, some missing, some alive..... to hang in the L.B. J. Library in Austin, Texas . The display is called " Faces from the Vietnam War". Another Honor.

THANK YOU ALL FOR CARING ABOUT ALL OUR SERVICE MEN AND WOMEN.

Dorothy Schafernocker
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169- Marshall Dr.
Newark, Texas 76071