

HERITAGE FLIGHT MUSEUM ADOPTS CATKILLERS, 6 NOVEMBER 2015



KIA/MIA Memorial board constructed by Al Paulsen

Hello, Catkillers and Heritage Flight Museum (HFM):

We Catkillers have a new and permanent home in the Pacific Northwest – specifically, Heritage Flight Museum at Skagit Regional Airport, Burlington, Washington. HFM is located 78 nm (as the crow flies) north of Ft. Lewis where the 220th was formed 50 years ago under the leadership of then Major Jerry Curry.

Below are some photos of our gang at HFM last Friday when we dedicated the plaque honoring the 24 KIA and MIA crewmembers assigned to the 220th during 1965-1971. The plaque was designed and fabricated by Al Paulsen framing the names rubbed on the “Vietnam Wall” in Washington, DC, by Dick Tobiason and son Erik Tobiason. Photos are by Dick’s son Scott Tobiason.

Our Catkiller Webmaster Don Ricks presented a plaque and letter from our first Commanding Officer, then Major Jerry Curry (now MG, Retired), to Catkiller Historian Gene Wilson, thanking Gene for decades of historical research preserving our lineage and history.

Dick presented HFM owner Bill Anders (Apollo 8 Astronaut, MG, USAF Retired) with plaques honoring his late father, Commander Arthur F. Anders, Navy Cross, 1937; and Colonel William Jones, Medal of Honor A-1 Skyraider pilot, Vietnam.

Below [in the linked photos] is a 1970 photo of Bill and Dick when Dick worked for Bill in the Nixon White House. Here is a recreation of the iconic "Earthrise" photo taken by Bill during the Apollo 8 mission 3 years after the Catkillers began their 7 year mission in Vietnam: <https://www.youtube.com/embed/dE-vOscpiNc>

To cap off the dedication, Bill and his son Greg (Lt. Col. USAF Retired) made several low passes in Bill's new "Carbon Cub" and the HFM Birddog. Al Paulsen had the pleasure of conducting a low level recon with Greg 44 years after the Catkillers left Vietnam. And Greg treated us to a super lunch.

Several Catkillers made donations to HFM as one meaningful way of thanking the Anders family for displaying our history with their Birddog and a dozen flyable warbirds. Donations to Heritage Flight Museum can be made here: <http://www.heritageflight.org/>

Thanks goes to all at Heritage Flight Museum for linking the Catkillers with your (and our beloved) grand O-1 Birddog and the A-1 Skyraider. Anyone traveling in the PNW should add HFM to his/her bucket list!

Dick Tobiason

CK 26, Hue Citadel 1966-1967

Link to ceremony photos:

<https://onedrive.live.com/?cid=bf5dcfee8f35d45b&id=BF5DCFEE8F35D45B!2390&Bsrc=Photomail&Bpub=SDX.Photos&sff=1&authkey=!AMiF6F0UcmARYOI>

Hello to all of you, what a great ceremony at HFM. It was wonderful to meet all of you and your kind words about Dan touched my heart. I am forever grateful for all that has been done to keep our Vet's stories alive. I hope everyone has a memorable Veterans Day, and I salute you all.

Attached is a story and photo of Ann Margaret at Phu Bai. She changed her clothes in the van that housed the electronic equipment, as it was the only place that had air conditioning. I remember Dan [Zimmerly] telling about her and how gracious she was to the servicemen. Dan is in the front row of the photo on the far left. There may be others from the Catkillers unit that can be recognized in this photo.

Thank you for including my husband Rick and myself in the ceremony and the great lunch, it was appreciated so very much.

God bless you all,

Rick and Margaret Brookshire

Margaret's photos:



L-R:

Greg Anders, Bills son & A10 Pilot; **Dick Tobiason**, Catkiller Pilot; **Margaret Brookshire**, widow of Dan Zimmerly and wife of Rick Brookshire; **Al Paulsen**, Catkiller Pilot; **Charlie Welsh**, *Original* Catkiller Pilot; **Gene Wilson**, Our Cherished Honored Guest; **Don Ricks**, Catkiller Pilot; **Dennis Currie**, Catkiller Crew Chief/Mechanic; **Ray Caryl**, Catkiller Pilot; **Jeffery Thompson**, Aerial Observer; **MG Bill Anders**, Apollo 8 Astronaut.





Not To Be Forgotten (A Moment of Truth) sent by Dennis Currie:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tQT9e3YvAvM>

Selected Catkiller Takes A Ride! Former Operations Officer, Al Paulsen, DFC

And in flight!! Greg Anders, piloting the museum's Birddog

The best one is the one of him alone, although the grin is constant throughout!!



Al Paulsen, all smiles!!

Greg and Dick,

I can't thank you enough for the opportunity to once again know what it feels like to strap on a Birdog, and as Canadian pilot John

Gillespie Magee so eloquently put it, ---"slipped the surly bonds of earth, And danced the skies on laughter---".

The photos give evidence of the pure joy I was experiencing.

For many years I had yearned and dreamed for a chance to fly in an O-1 once again.

I'll never forget, as long as I live, the wonderful gift that you have given me.

Greg, please pass on to your father my sincere appreciation for helping to make this happen.

I look forward to seeing you again in the future.

Best wishes,

Al Paulsen

All -

First, I will also send a note of thanks to all at the Heritage Flight Museum. We are pleased that HFM has accepted us as part of the museum collection, which will soon include Southeast Asia.

Second, thank you General Curry for your personally signed Certificate of Appreciation and letter. I am sorry that you were unable to join us, but I certainly understand health situations.

Third, thanks to Dick, Don, Dennis and Ray for your team effort in all that happened last Friday. Surprised... honored...humbled... even a few tears... what else can I say. It was moving and I appreciate all that you have done. The Catkiller history work was not accomplished by me alone. You were all a part of making these memories from 1965 to 1971 available for everyone to enjoy.

Fourth, Al, thank you again for making the special Memorial to our Fallen Comrades for the 2012 Reunion in Seattle. It's a beautiful piece of work and having it displayed at HLM will be a standing tribute to the Catkillers we left behind.

Fifth, Charlie, thank you for coming, not because you were only nearby, but because you represented the original Catkillers along with General Curry.

Sixth, Jeff [Thompson], it was always great to have Aerial Observers as part of our team. It was good to see you again.

Thank you everyone for making this a very special day with many fond memories of the 220th and the honor bestowed upon me.

Sincerely and respectfully,

Gene [Wilson]

Catkiller 5/3, 1966-67

Ray Caryl photos:



Gene,

What an honor and privilege to be apart of this ceremony. It was an incredible experience to meet with everyone and enjoy the recognition that was bestowed upon the 220th Organization and our leadership. Your impact on what we have accomplished is incredibly enormous. For that, we will be forever grateful! And, to meet Ellie, finally, was truly special.

It was great seeing Charlie, Al and Dick and learning what was going on in their lives. All I can say is that I hope Dick and his wife Mary Jane come to Tucson again, since my wife will have met her match in conversation! Grin! What a lovely lady she is! But, for that matter, there is always a place in my home for any Catkiller who chooses to visit. Tucson is a wonderful place to live and lots of history. All are truly welcome!

I have cc'd Margaret's email in this note. I can attest that she was not only delighted by the

recognition but earned a place in our hearts. Dan Zimmerly's story resonates with who we were as soldier/citizens. We went to war, we raised our families, and went on with life. Our career paths took us in different directions; however, our legacy is one of love for family and friends. At the end of the day what better epitaph to declare that we were true to that idea.

Thank you Gene for all that you have done and contributed.

Dennis [Currie]

P.S. My phone has been ringing off the hook today!



Dick Tobiason photos:



Bill Anders' father, Lt. Arthur "Tex" Anders, earned the Navy Cross for his action aboard gunboat "Panay."



Dennis Currie, Ray Cary and Don Ricks stand in for General Curry to present award



Note of Interest: On October 19, Ellie Wilson received a Lifetime Achievement Award for Community Service signed by President Barack Obama and presented by Lakewood, Washington, Mayor Don Anderson. Video available on YouTube.



A similar photo at the Catkiller yearly newsletter and one above on page 3 provides names of those in the above photo. To the far right is former astronaut, MG William A. "Bill" Anders, U. S. Air Force Reserve, retired.



Al Paulsen on a ride-of-a-lifetime with Greg Anders; with Dick Tobiason, right.

Miscellaneous photos:







Mary Jane Tobiason

Donna

Sharon Paulsen



Don Ricks

Margaret Brookshire

Dennis Currie

Certificate and Letter of Appreciation:

Dennis Currie, Ray Caryl and Don Ricks were honored to present to Gene Wilson, on the behalf of the men of 220th Aviation Company, their families and friends, an all important service and personal sacrifice recognition for work that has ultimately helped future generations remember what has been done for us. General Curry's words say it so well!

220th Aviation Company (www.catkillers.org)

Certificate of

APPRECIATION

On Behalf of All Catkillers and Friends From 1965 to 1971

is

Presented to:

***Donald E. "Gene" Wilson,
Colonel, USA Retired***

***In Recognition of Your Exceptional Contributions to
the Catkiller Web Site as Unit Historian
During the Period July 2011 to 27 May 2014***

6 November 2015

Date



**Jerry Ralph Curry,
Major General, USA, Retired
Original Commander, 1965-1966**

The Wilsons:



Gene

Ellie

We appreciate very much our time well spent at Heritage Flight Museum that day, and our sincere "thank you" goes out to the founders, organizers and staff for making this honor possible.

Bill and Greg Anders and Kate Simmons made sure this was a great day for all present!



6 November 2015

Dear Colonel Wilson:

This is a rather formal greeting since your fellow veterans more commonly refer to you as "Gene," and all know you officially served as Volunteer Historian for the 220th Aviation Company, during the period July 2011 to 27 May 2014. All who worked closely with you during that period regard you as indispensable when cataloging the 220th's history. Without hesitation they point out that it would be impossible to account for the hours you devoted to your research and related activities.

Though this must have often deprived your lovely lady Ellie of much of your free time, I am informed that you proudly acknowledge her loving care and steady assistance which allowed you to fulfill the many requirements of gathering the unit's fragmented history. While your associates strongly encouraged you at every opportunity, they realized that such a long and intense period of personal sacrifice and productivity would eventually necessitate your one day stepping down and returning to a well-earned Army retirement rest.

Gene, you are a notably and thoroughly dedicated individual and all the members of the 220th have asked me to convey to you how much they have appreciated the style and manner with which you cataloged the achievements of a well-documented Catkiller history. As one reads through the many pages produced by you within the last several years, your imprint is on all of them.

You have been fair-minded and calm in your approach, sensitive to issues, and conscientious in sharing publicly what is coherent, prudent and reasonable. You have documented the 220th history with reflective candor and unreserved honesty. It is also obvious that what you undertook and to which you attached your name reflected an honest and factually accurate portrayal of who we were and what we accomplished as a military unit on behalf of the nation.

Thank you, Gene, for all you have done for the legacy of so many proud 220th veterans. Additionally, you are hereby designated Catkiller Historian Emeritus.

Enclosure: Addendum of signatures

Jerry Ralph Curry
Major General, USA, Retired
Original Commander, 1965-1966
220th Aviation Company "Catkillers"

Donald E. Wilson,
Colonel, USA, Retired

*Documents presented were personally edited and signed by MG Jerry Ralph Curry.
Signature addendums collected by Ray Caryl at the 2015 All-Birdog Reunion at Fort Rucker and a personal letter from LTC Ed Miler, USA, Retired, also accompanied the items presented. Ray Caryl expertly designed and mounted the documents.*

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