

Richard Korpics

Tuy Hoa AB, 1967

RIP: 1989

Rest In Peace, my friend Rich.

by David L. Stoltzfus



About a year ago, I emailed concerning an old friend of mine from the ranks of the Air/Security Police. I had attempted to locate him, only finding out that he had passed away in 1989. Since he is not or ever has been a member of the association, I thought it somewhat of an idea to have him mentioned somewhere in the site. I have written the following and attached a photo of Rich I received from a friend and former officer, who had worked with him on the Bethlehem Police Department in Bethlehem, Pa. Richard Korpics.

With the vast resources available on the internet I used it to search for old friends or acquaintances. Certain people for one reason or another stand out in life and as we grow older, we have the time to possibly reconnect with them. One such person for me was Rich Korpics, a fellow Security Policeman.

In 1966, we became friends as we both attended the Air Police Academy at Lackland AFB, Texas following Basic Training. Following the academy upon graduation and anxious to get home on leave after basic and tech school, it was a hard time to get to one place to another since there was a major airline strike in process. Rich and I decided to travel together via train from Lackland to Philadelphia since we were both from Pennsylvania. His dad had arranged to pick us up at the train station on our arrival, drive 50 miles drop me off and then proceed to their home in Bethlehem, Pa. It turned out to be a rather memorable trip on the train since it was a 3 day trip, and of course, all we could afford was coach rate, which meant sitting, sleeping and eating in a seat for the duration of the trip.

It's too long ago now to remember specifics. Both Rich and I would meet again, at Ellsworth AFB, South Dakota after home leave, as it was our first official change of station, to begin our Air/Security Police hitch in the Air Force. While there we made several other friends, and within a year, a large group of us, volunteered for Vietnam. We all certainly thought, it couldn't be much worse than the howling snow and being "Sacamcized" as we refer to SAC security duties.

We completed our one week of AZR Training before going on leave before leaving for Vietnam in October, 1967. A dozen or so of us, received orders for duty at Tuy Hoa AB, but upon arrival, we were scattered about all over the place at different air bases, for our tour of duty. It is to the best of my knowledge that Rich remained at Tuy Hoa for his tour. I can't remember ever having any contact with him after that.

Years passed and one day I sat at the computer with the idea of trying to see if I could locate him. Somehow, I ran across Don Hamilton, one of our members who currently resides in Bethlehem, Pa. I contacted him, in an effort to see if he knew of Rich. Even though Don Hamilton was not a native of Bethlehem he hit the trail, and rapidly, found a name and telephone number for Rich's, second wife in Bethlehem. I called the number and had a brief conversation with her about Rich. She couldn't tell me a lot of Rich's life since she had only entered into his life, within some years before his death. She had no current or past photos of Rich or any information she could pass along about his Vietnam experiences. Contacting any of his children or other relatives would have, in my mind, somewhat invasive after I spoke with his second wife. As we all know, life is full of ups and downs, so it seemed the better part of valor not to pursue that avenue. I did however discover that Rich had become a Police Officer in Bethlehem after his discharge from the Air Force. A path a lot of us have followed, after being trained as the Air Force finest. I was lucky to contact Francis R. Donchez, outgoing Bethlehem City Police Commissioner.

This is the email I received from the Police Commissioner.

Thursday, June 1, 2006

Dear Mr.Stoltzfus,

I have attached a photo, of Rich. He retired with a disability pension in May 1989 and passed away on September 4, 1989 at the young age of 42. I am one of the few remaining officers who worked with Rich. We worked on patrol on Adam Team, which patrolled the west side of the City. Rich's calm and friendly demeanor served him well, enabling him to resolve situations in a peaceful manner when others may have proved the situation. Good luck with your organization.

Very truly yours,

*Francis R. Donchez, Jr., Esq.
Commissioner of Police*

In the end I found my friend, but unfortunately I was some 18 years too late to maybe get together, talk about the old times and catch up on what had transpired in our lives since that October day, now almost 40 years to the date, we last saw each other. My purpose in asking Don to post this somewhere on the sight is this." ...I only simply want in some way to ensure that something survives us all, and that someone may look some day and say hey there is Rich Korpics name. He was so and so, and that's neat that he served." Someone else out there may remember him, and find the information interesting. We take care of our own, so in a small way, I do this in memorial to a friend I once knew.

Rest In Peace, my friend, Rich. Thanks for the memories.

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