

## In Remembrance of



136

Bickerstaff, Frank C.

VA

12th SPS, Phu Cat

66-67

**RIP: 01-01-2005**

**Steve Gattis**



**Death of a Brother - Life Member #136 Frank Bickerstaff -- [Steve Gattis, VSPA President](#), Sun, Jan 02 2005, 15: 31:22**

Hello to all.

Yesterday, I received the sad news that a dear friend and brother, Frank Bickerstaff, died. The news came at a time when I was thinking about the VSPA, the new year and how we could do more to bring old buddies and new friends together. Although Frank had been fighting a second bout with cancer and had been very sick, the news still came as a shock, something like the news about another base getting hit and a brother Security Policeman dying.

Frank and I talked about events like this, about bases getting hit, about losing dear friends. He was down-to-earth pragmatic about death, yet we both knew that in death, like the other bases getting hit, it won't always be the other guy or the other base, our base and our lives would soon be affected, so we had better be ready.

Frank was very serious about being ready for anything, but he also had a wicked sense of humor that often illustrated his capacity to think. His compassion and respect for his fellow security policeman were right at the top for the man he was, a retired Master Sergeant with a Master's Degree. Frank wrote about the young people and the leaders he had met at Camp Bullis during our 2003 reunion in San Antonio. We rode on the bus together when we left Camp Bullis and all he could talk about was the great training and the *esprit de corps* among the security forces personnel. He was proud to be a living ancestor, to have been a part of establishing the foundation for their future. He believed in our motto of "*We take care of our own*" and said that he loved being an NCO so that he could take care of his troops. When I asked him about his degree and if he had ever thought of being an officer, his eyes twinkled and the humor kicked in when he said, "Nah, I couldn't lower myself or leave the troops." Of course, there were officers he loved and respected, but he loved the troops more.

Frank was ready. He died on January 1st 2005, and his obituary was sent by email on January 1st. The email was addressed from Frank Bickerstaff to several of his friends. The subject was "Obituary of Frank Bickerstaff." At first I had to wonder if it was a joke because I have an email file with 226 notes, jokes, cartoons and photographs from Frank. He loved a good story and enjoyed telling jokes. In fact, as an elementary school teacher, he had to lead a rather restrained life where he could not use the language of a Master Sergeant. Email and VSPA reunions provided the opportunity for him to be eloquent, thoughtful and, on occasion, profane. He was a great writer and friend to many of us.

Frank was the one man who could be very serious about brotherhood and make you want to go to war. His wisdom was truth, if you would listen. And like so many of us who never had an actual brother, Frank made you understand why we were so proud to have air policeman and security policemen as brothers, and why you would pick him as a brother if God ever gave us a choice.

Knowing that Frank would always be ready for whatever event would come along, it is no surprise that his obituary came from his own email and was probably written months ago. I'll leave you with Frank's words and the hope that sometime in our lives, we will all have the opportunity to have a friend like Frank. For now, it is good to know that Frank is with our brothers who have dismounted and are listed at Life Member #111. I am certain that his arrival in Heaven was a major event, that he arrived ready for inspection, and will probably suggest to God that he form an IG Team to inspect the troops on the ground.

Steve Gattis, President  
Vietnam Security Police Association  
Life Member #49  
Phù Cát 68 - 69

## OBITUARY OF FRANK BICKERSTAFF

Frank C. Bickerstaff, Jr., 68 died on 1 January 2005. Frank was born in Richwood, West Virginia, and the family later moved to Plymouth, NC where he called home before entering the US Air Force in July 1954.

He served as an Air Force policeman in TX, SC, CA, NC and AL, along with several tours in Japan, Okinawa, Korea, Taiwan and Vietnam before his retirement in August 1981. Frank received his Masters degree in Criminal Justice from Troy State University after his retirement and immediately started to work for the Army and Air Force Exchange Service as a Safety and Security Manager. He and his wife Ryuko spent seven years in Nuremberg, Germany with AAFES before being reassigned to Newport News, VA, in August 1992. Frank worked as the safety and security manager at the AAFES Dan Daniel Distribution Center until he retired in November 2000. Frank taught as substitute teacher at the Kiln Creek Elementary for two years. He was a life time member of the Air Force Vietnam Security Police Association, as well as a member of the USAF Security Police Association. Frank also traveled a lot and fished when he could work it into his busy "retirement schedule."

He was predeceased in death by his mother, Beulah Bickerstaff, and his sister, Emily Kay Yopp. He is survived by his loving and caring wife Ryuko formally of Fukuoka Japan, his father, Frank C. Bickerstaff, Sr. who resides in Plymouth, NC. His uncle Jack and his wife Dot live in Charleston WVA and Mary (Jack's twin sister) resides in Richwood, WVA. Several of his cousins reside in NC, FL, WV.

Frank's remains will be cremated and he will be interred in the Peninsular Gardens cemetery in Newport News, VA.

*Donations to the National Cancer society are requested in lieu of flowers.*

***Frank Bickerstaff***

***12th SPS, Phù Cát***

***1966-1967***



**Date Posted:** Sun, Jan 02 2005, 14: 13: 30

**Author:** [Edward F. Roberts](#)

**Subject:** Re: Death of a Brother - Life Member #136 Frank Bickerstaff

**In reply to:** Steve Gattis, VSPA President 's message, "*Death of a Brother - Life Member #136 Frank Bickerstaff*" on Sun, Jan 02 2005, 8: 29: 52

Sgt Bickerstaff was my com/plotter at Phù Cát in 1966. He kept us younger troops awake, alert, and was also very good at keeping us calm when things got scary. He was a good man and a good NCO. I will always remember him, it was my pleasure to have known him. Rest in Peace Sarge.

**Date Posted:** Sun, Jan 02 2005, 15: 31:22

**Author:** [Glenn Wilson](#)

**Subject:** Re: Death of a Brother - Life Member #136 Frank Bickerstaff

**In reply to:** Steve Gattis, VSPA President 's message, "*Death of a Brother - Life Member #136 Frank Bickerstaff*" on Sun, Jan 02 2005, 8: 29: 52

Shocked is an understatement! Steve is 100% correct. Frank was like a member of everyone's family. Our world is saddened beyond belief and is much poorer with his passing. They didn't come any better than Frank Bickerstaff and I considered him to be one of the best friends I've ever had. Nothing left to say except that we loved Frank and he lived the kind of life that we all should try to exemplify.

Glenn Wilson, Phù Cát 68-69 LM#117

*We Take Care of Our Own*

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