



Record Jack Wilhite 7-9-2015

Col. Jack Elliott Wilhite of Morrison, Colo., will be honored by a Military Rite conducted by The American Legion, Post 0296, on Friday, July 10, 2015 at 4 p.m. at Goldenrod Cemetery in Deep River. Prayers by Michelle Williamson, United Church

The ceremony will be held at the grave site of Jack's parents, Mabelle Elliott Wilhite 1891-1957 and Roy Pearl Wilhite 1886-1984.

Col Wilhite "flew west" on Jan. 26, 2015.

Col. Jack Elliott Wilhite was born in Deep River, on August 18, 1928. His first flight was at the age of ten in a Ford Tri-Motor, followed shortly by a ride in a Stearman. He began a 32-year flying career in WWII when he was selected for an Army Air Corp specialized training program. The A-Bomb reduced the need for pilots and he spent a year in an anti-aircraft artillery unit. In 1950 Jack began flying fighters in the Air Force and he ultimately accrued over 41,000 flying hours - 5000 hours in military jet fighters.

In 1947 Jack was hired by the FBI serving under J. Edgar Hoover in Washington D.C. and Phoenix. The Korean War gave him the opportunity to pursue his love of flight. Jack did his basic flight training in Greenville, MS in a T-6 Texan. He was named outstanding cadet in Class 53-A and subsequently assigned to advanced flight training in Laredo AFB, Texas - to train in the T-28 and T-33. He then went to Moody AFB in Georgia for jet instrument instructor school and was transferred to Tyndall AFB in Florida for fighter gunnery training in the P-80. From Tyndall AFB, Jack was sent to Europe and flew the F-84 and the F-86 Saber for three years over Europe, Africa, and England. He also had a short tour with the RAF which provided him flying time in the Tiger Moth, Vampire and Meteor aircraft.

Shortly after the Korean War ended, Jack returned to Colorado and re-entered the Law School at the University of Denver. He joined the Colorado Air National Guard 140th Fighter Wing in 1956. Jack flew the F-80 and the F-86L aircraft with the 197th FIS Squadron in Wyoming where he met and flew with Colorado Aviation Hall of Fame member Carl Williams. In 1959 Jack moved to the 120th Fighter Squadron, Colorado Air National Guard based in Colorado. Jack flew every deployment the unit was assigned to, including Alaska, Puerto Rico, Turkey, and Panama. He volunteered to join his squadron for a year in Vietnam where he was decorated with two Distinguished Flying Crosses, thirteen Air Medals and the Vietnam Cross of Gallantry. These are in addition to twenty-one other awards and decorations. He is a member of the Caterpillar Club, signifying a life-saving ejection from an F-100.

Jack's love for Colorado was evident when he designed and promoted the Colorado State flag on the tails and canopies of the aircraft he and others flew for the Colorado Air National Guard. While in the Colorado Air National Guard, Jack climbed the ranks to Flight Commander, Chief of Command and Control and State Director of Operations for Air. In 1961 Jack was called to active duty during the Berlin crisis and was deployed to several bases to provide support for Army and Air Force joint training exercises.

In addition to his Air National Guard duties, Jack was hired by United Airlines in 1956. He flew the Convair 240, DC-6, DC-7, DC-8, and DC-10. Jack retired from United Airlines as a Captain in 1988, capping a 32-year career with the carrier.

Jack presided as President of the Colorado Aviation Historical Society for six years. During his tenure he rescued a 25' X 15' tile mosaic The Progress of Flight from the Stapleton Airport terminal when it closed in 1995. The mosaic was scheduled to be demolished, but Jack's efforts and perseverance led to the acquisition of the historic artwork which was donated to the Colorado Aviation Historical Society. Jack served with the Colorado Aviation Historical Society as a Board Member, Vice President, President, Chairman of the Board, and Colorado Aviation Hall of Fame Banquet Chairman. He was instrumental in the opening of the Colorado Heritage Hall which honors Colorado Aviation Hall of Fame Laureates.

Wilhite is survived by his wife, Bea; sons, Michael Wilhite and Lance Wilhite; a stepson, James Harrod; a stepdaughter, Jan Carr; cousins; and grandchildren and great-grandchildren.