

GORDON ALAN BONNEL

Lieutenant Commander Gordon A. Bonnel, USN (Ret.), was born on 16 February 1938 and passed away on 23 November 2014.

Gordy was a U.S. Naval Academy graduate, Class of 1960. He served as a naval aviator. He flew the S-2 Tracker Stoof in squadrons VS-39 and VS-27 aboard FORRESTAL (CVA-59). His specialty was anti-submarine warfare, operating in European, Caribbean and East Coast waters. He also flew the C-1 carrier-based transport aircraft (COD) and did a tour as catapult and arresting gear officer aboard FORRESTAL. He served as a primary flight instructor in Pensacola, FL, training recruits to fly and solo their first aircraft.

Upon retirement from the Navy in 1981, Gordy organized a fraternal organization of former S-2 and C-1 pilots and other air crewmen (worldwide), known as Real Aviators Flew Stoofs (RAFS), holding reunions all over the country. His database of over 6,000 veterans will be donated to the Library of Congress.

An adventurer, Gordy, rode an 11,000 mile 5-week motorcycle trip around the USA during his last year in the Navy. He and his wife, Nancy, lived on a houseboat on the California Delta and in San Francisco Bay, while he worked at Alpine Skills International as a handyman, cook, telemark instructor and assistant guide. He parked cars and shoveled decks at Donner Ski Ranch, formed an investment club, played the stock market, and was a crewmember and cook aboard a U.S. Geological Service river tug in Alaska, all while fulfilling a boyhood dream of building a log cabin in the Sierra Nevada with Nancy. After many years of felling, peeling and notching logs, they completed construction and lived in the cabin year-round for 10 years on 20 acres at 7,200 feet.

On the personal side, Gordy married Susie Duffy in 1960. They had four children, ten grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. He and Susie were divorced in 1981.

Gordy met Nancy in Puerto Rico, and after 20 years of dating, were married in 1998 in a Mexican bar after two pitchers of margaritas.

He is survived by his wife, Nancy; two sons, Gordon Jr. and Shawn; two daughters, Kelly and Joanna; ten grandchildren; three great-grandchildren; and two nephews.

Gordy lived life to the fullest and then some; an original Renaissance man.

January-February 2015 Shipmate