

Season 16

Life after the USAF

About two years after retiring, I started having dizzy spells. A few years later, I started split vision vertigo events and ocular migraines. This was diagnosed as inner ear problems. That turned out to be wrong, so the VA decided I was hyperventilating and prescribed Dramamine. I protested, but I was simply a patient, not a highly trained pilot that knew exactly what hyperventilation was.

As soon as the dizzy spells started, I grounded myself. I did not consider myself safe to fly solo. The avid aviator was grounded for life.

The above event was the beginning of a long time history of medical problems and my 36 year fight with the Veterans Administration (VA). More on the VA will come later. 2004 was really my banner year. That year, in addition to working full time, I had left side rotator cuff surgery, three prostate surgeries, lung surgery, two strokes and a leaking spinal tap.

After the two strokes, an MRI showed my problem was arthritic bone spurs from my ejection neck injury were impinging the vertebral arteries in my neck. If I turned my head fully in any direction, the blood flow to the back of my brain was cut off. After 10-15 seconds, I would get symptoms. Since my strokes, I no longer have frequent vertigo and ocular migraines (dead brain area?); however, if I turn my head fully in any direction for 10-15 seconds I get dizzy, become angry, and then have depression for 4-8 hours. The MRI also showed I have an inoperable brain aneurism. For 3 years, I got an MRI every 6 months, then it was annually and starting this year, 2013, it is every other year. Obama Care will most likely stop that. They kill horses, don't they? Why not add in the old people? We have no tax productivity use left. We drain resources from society. Besides, the ones that don't belong to the AARP, vote the wrong way.

The left side of my face burns like it is under an infra-red lamp.

In 2012, I had Agent Orange ischemic heart disease and had to have 2 stents installed in my heart. My neurologist says I have so much neurological damage, putting me on a heart lung machine for a heart bypass (which ALWAYS causes neurological damage) will make me a bobble head.

I am now being tested semiannually for Agent Orange prostate cancer. I am classified High Grade PIN. That simply means, the biopsy needle has not grabbed a cancer cell

The Love of My Life

I wrote this story in season 5. That was my point of view. This one is written from Evie's perspective and that of the wives of most fighter pilots.

In their eyes, we had a mistress - a mistress with which flesh and blood could not compete. That mistress had a skin of aluminum alloy, bones of other exotic metals, sinews of cables and joints of pulleys and steel rod connecting points. Her blood was hydraulic fluid pulsing through metal veins and arteries to activate cylinders of steel to give her movement. Her thought processes were

generated in electronic tubes, transistors or circuit boards and were carried to all parts of her body by wire, electrical impulses or fiber optics.

As the need of our wishes required, her heart could purr, hum, and roar. The breath of her whirling heart kept us both cool when it was hot and warm when it was cold. Her exhaled breath propelled us to places few have gone and it appears fewer still will also go.

She carried us to places we wanted to go. One was a dream of ours, but a dread for Evie and the other wives. She could bring people together and tear them apart.

Like all of our loves, she liked a gentle touch, but could respond to a strong hand. Be rough and she could rebel like a vicious beast.

Our mistress could also die. Sometimes she would let us go to fall in love with another. Other times, in her jealous rage, she would take us to her smoking hole on some lonely hill side, in a sand dune, to a deep watery grave, or under a canopy of great trees.

As with many loves, some are part time lovers, but there is always the one that rules over them all. Even when she is gone forever, she lives on in our thoughts and dreams of days gone by. Some have and live those dreams until the days of their graying hair and wrinkling skin. Even so, she still gives a surge of strength to our aging hearts.

She went by names like Spits, Mustang, Hun, Bent Wing, Jug, Lead Sled, Widow Maker, White Rocket, Zipper, and Thud. Names, which to some may seem degrading, but to us, they were names of endearment.

Some, like me, had a shortened season of life where the love was hot and flush. We lived or died in the arms of our love. As the result of a broken body, caused when the love of my life allowed me to depart her for another, in 1978, my flying season abruptly ended. Even so, after 47 years, the mere thoughts of her puts a spring in my step, a twinkle in my eye, and a racing in my heart. Old loves, really never die.