



An Original Outlaw !

CWO-3 Jimmie Kirkley

CW3 Jimmie (Big Jim) Kirkley passed away on April 28, 2020 at his home in Palm Bay, Florida.

Jim was born February 10, 1930 in Howe, OK. and attended high school at Poteau, OK. He left high school after two years to enlist in the Army at age 16! When asked how he managed to avoid detection of his age, he would merely say that, at that time, just after WWII, no one seemed to pay much attention to such details. Plus, he was big, and looked older than he was. After his first enlistment he left the Army but, as he once said, he got hungry, so he reenlisted.

He attended jump school at Fort Benning, GA and spent several years with the 82d Air-borne Division where he earned his Master Parachute Badge. He earned his high school equivalency GED in 1952. Jim applied for Army Aviation flight training and received his Army Aviator wings, and Warrant Officer appointment, at Fort Rucker in June 1957. His first aviation assignment was to Europe where he flew CH-34 helicopters.

In September 1964, Jim was with the 11th Air Assault Division in Fort Benning, GA when he was selected to be the maintenance warrant officer for a newly formed helicopter company which was to be deployed to Viet Nam in 34 days. Because of his maintenance expertise, he was one of six members of the unit who comprised the Advanced Party of the 62d Aviation Company to Vinh Long in September of that year.

Upon arrival in Vinh Long, his expertise as an outstanding maintenance Warrant was immediately utilized when he was tasked with organizing and supervising the merging the 62d. and 114th Avn. Co. maintenance and service detachments for better efficiency. While on a maintenance test flight, in the Mekong Delta in 1965, he observed a UH-1 helicopter having been shot down by enemy fire. He diverted his aircraft and, under fire, rescued the crew of the downed aircraft.

Jim retired as a CW3 from the Army in 1967 as a Senior Army Aviator. He returned to Viet Nam the next year as a civilian Boeing Tech Rep and provided maintenance support for a Chinook company at Phu Loi. Jim's logbook would show he had amassed over 4000 career flying hours.

He married his wife Linda in 1987 and both were regular attendees at reunions of his Viet Nam unit, the "Outlaws". At the time of his death, at 90, he had the distinction of being the oldest living member of the Outlaw aviation unit. Burial will be in Arlington National Cemetery at a date to be announced.