

## Captain Robert Marshall, USMC | Vietnam Veteran

Born and raised in Venice CA, Mr. Robert “Bob” Marshall graduated from UCLA with a Bachelor’s of Science in Chemistry. During his senior year at UCLA, he joined the United States Marine Corps. He attended Officer Candidate School at Quantico VA, and was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant.

He received orders to Pensacola FL where he received his flight training, and flew T34 and T28 single engine trainers before transitioning to helicopters. It was there in Pensacola, that he married his college sweetheart, the former Toni Zaragoza of Holtville.

He flew Jet Rangers, and was in the second class to fly the Huey as a basic trainer. Mr. Marshall stated, “These Huey’s were second-hand from the Army, complete with patched up bullet holes.” After receiving his Naval Aviator Wings, he received orders to Marine Corps Air Facility Santa Ana for transition training in the H46 Sea Knight helicopter. It was during the last few weeks of this three-month course that he received orders to WestPac with Fleet Marine Forces in Vietnam.

He arrived in DaNang in a packed full DC-8 in the middle of the night, and was hustled to a bunker to avoid any possible rocket fire as airliners were prime targets. Though they didn’t receive any rocket fire, there was an attack on the wire surrounding their quarters that night, along with very loud machine gun fire.

The following morning the new arrivals were carted off to Marble Mountain Air Facility (MMAF), which lies just south and east of DaNang, and on the South China beach. It was there that he would fly over 400 hours in the H-46, earning 26 air medals representing over 500 missions.

During that time, he flew all types of missions: Logistics (passenger hauls), resupply (both internal loads consisting of personnel, and “sling loads” consisting of ammunition and food); Strikes, which were multi-plane troop assaults from the air, complete with jet fighter bombers, and occasional shore bombardment from Navy destroyers; and Reconnaissance insertions and extractions. His favorite missions were medical evacuations, both day and night.

While in Country, his wife’s family suffered a great loss of their brother, Victor of the 101st Airborne Division, who was a Sergeant leading his men, when he was killed in action. Victor was awarded the Silver Star for his actions.

Marshall’s final mission was a night medevac to rescue three wounded Marines during a firefight along the coast south of Marble Mountain. The first time into the zone, they landed in a wet rice paddy, and through a miscommunication while under fire, they took off thinking they had the wounded aboard. In fact, they did not. Unfortunately, they had the escorting Cobra helicopters reattack the enemy fire, so they could go in the second time for the extraction. This time “We were able to get the wounded aboard, again under heavy machine gun and mortar fire. As I lifted from the zone, my controls were shot out and we were completely out of control. We crashed into the rice paddy.” The crash killed his copilot, and wounded Marines. Marshall was badly wounded with both arms, and femurs in both legs broken. Their escort H-46 was able to swoop down, and pick everyone up, evacuating them to the Army 95th Evacuation Hospital at China Beach.

He was hospitalized for approximately six months at Long Beach Naval Hospital, in a full body cast, and leg braces before being medically retired. Prior to his discharge, he was promoted to the rank of Captain.

During his “second” career, he became a general building contractor, then went on to becoming a city building inspector, and ultimately retired in 2014 as a building official for the City of Santa Maria CA Building Department.

Not one to remain idle in retirement, he built an airplane from a kit, and started flying all over again.

