

Black, Cole



Deceased 11/09/2007

Name: Cole Black
Rank/Branch: O4/US Navy
Unit:
Date of Birth: 23 November 32
Home City of Record: Lake City MN
Date of Loss: 21 June 1966
Country of Loss: North Vietnam
Loss Coordinates: 213400N 1063900E (XJ708855)
Status (in 1973): Released POW
Category:
Aircraft/Vehicle/Ground: F8E

Other Personnel in Incident: (none missing)

Source: Compiled by Homecoming II Project from one or more of the following: raw data from U.S. Government agency sources, correspondence with POW/MIA families, published sources, interviews. Updated by the P.O.W. NETWORK 2008.

REMARKS: 730212 RELSD BY DRV

SYNOPSIS: The Vought F8 "Crusader" saw action early in U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia. Its fighter models participated both in the first Gulf of Tonkin reprisal in August 1964 and in the myriad attacks against North Vietnam during Operation Rolling Thunder. The Crusader was used exclusively by the Navy and Marine air wings (although there is one U.S. Air Force pilot reported shot down on an F8) and represented half or more of the carrier fighters in the Gulf of Tonkin during the first four years of the war. The aircraft was credited with nearly 53% of MiG kills in Vietnam.

The most frequently used fighter versions of the Crusader in Vietnam were the C, D, and E models although the H and J were also used. The Charlie carried only Sidewinders on fuselage racks, and were assigned such missions as CAP (Combat Air Patrol), flying at higher altitudes. The Echo model had a heavier reinforced wing able to carry extra Sidewinders or bombs, and were used to attack ground targets, giving it increased vulnerability. The Echo version launched with less fuel, to accommodate the larger bomb store, and frequently arrived back at ship low on fuel. The RF models were equipped for photo reconnaissance.

The combat attrition rate of the Crusader was comparable to similar fighters. Between 1964 to 1972, eighty-three Crusaders were either lost or destroyed by enemy fire. Another 109 required major rebuilding. 145 Crusader pilots were recovered; 57 were not. Twenty of these pilots were captured and released. The other 43 remained missing at the end of the war.

Commander Cole Black was the pilot of an F8E sent on a combat mission over North Vietnam on June 21, 1966. His flight route took him northeast of Hanoi, where he was shot down near the border of Lang Son and Ha Bac Provinces about 15 miles southwest of the city of Lang Son.

For the next 7 years, Black was held in various prisoner of war camps, including the infamous "Hanoi Hilton" complex in Hanoi. He was released in the general prisoner release in 1973.

Since the war ended, nearly 10,000 reports relating to Americans missing, prisoner or unaccounted for in Southeast Asia have been received by the U.S. Government. Many authorities who have examined this largely classified information are convinced that hundreds of Americans are still held captive today. These reports are the source of serious distress to many returned American prisoners. They had a code that no one could honorably return unless all of the prisoners returned. Not only that code of honor, but the honor of our country is at stake as long as even one man remains unjustly held. It's time we brought our men home.

SOURCE: WE CAME HOME copyright 1977

Captain and Mrs. Frederic A Wyatt (USNR Ret), Barbara Powers Wyatt, Editor
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UPDATE - 09/95 by the P.O.W. NETWORK, Skidmore, MO

COLE BLACK

Commander - United States Navy

Shot Down: June 21, 1966

Released: February 12, 1973

I am Cmdr. Cole Black and I was born and grew up on a farm back in Minnesota. I attended a little school out in the country for the first eight years of my formal education. I then went to high school at Lake City, Minnesota. I enjoyed high school very much and became interested in sports. I liked football and wrestling best. At age 17 I enlisted in the U.S. Navy and spent five years working as an electronics technician.

After completing the officers candidate school at Newport Rhode Island I was given a commission. I attended flight training and won my wings of gold in February 1957. I then became a reccee (reconnaissance) pilot and spent four years with Light Photographic Squadron 62 based at Cecil Field Florida. After leaving that squadron in 1961 I attended the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School at Monterey California where I received my B.S. degree in 1964. The war in Vietnam was getting started and after leaving Monterey I was assigned to Fighter- Squadron 211 based at Miramar California. I had completed one combat cruise in Southeast Asia and had only seven days left on my second cruise when I was shot down.

I was shot down on 21 June 1966 while flying an F8E of Fighter Squadron 211 based aboard the attack carrier Hancock. I was shot down north of Hanoi near Kep airfield. I ejected from my disabled fighter at a very low altitude and was captured by some Vietnamese peasants very shortly after I hit the ground. The peasants did not treat me too badly. However, I was soon in the hands of the VPA. On the way to Hanoi I was put on display for the local people. Some of them were very hostile, others just curious. When I arrived at Hanoi I was treated like an animal. The communists call it "reducing you to a dog." Perhaps that is a good analogy because when they get done with you, you are unable to use your hands and have to do things, such as eating, like a dog.

Soon after I arrived in Hanoi, on July 6, 1966, the communists saw fit to display American POWs in Hanoi. We were hauled down town and forced to walk through the streets of Hanoi while the local population humiliated, beat and tried to intimidate us. It was probably the most real demonstration of mob action I have or ever will see. I believe that even with the vice-like grip the communists have on their people, the people nearly got out of hand that night. In my opinion they were so keyed up they would have liked to have

killed us all.

During my tour in prison, I can say that I have come to know some of the greatest guys in the world. We have known humiliation together; we have known compassion together; we have suffered together and now that we are home we once again, know the joy of being free and being in our great country. For me the thoughts of returning to America and to loved ones inspired me throughout my captivity. Even when you seem to be losing all else no one can take away the precious memories you may have of the loved ones you left behind, the joys you knew as a boy, the beauty of the country you will one day return to, and all the kind things your father and mother have done for you.

I am very happy to be back and I feel very lucky to be here. I hope to stay in the Air Force and serve my country once again.

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Cole Black retired from the United States Navy as a Captain. He and his wife Karen live in California.

In late 2002, Karen authored CODE OF CONDUCT, a novel, based on her own and her husbands experiences as a Vietnam, former Prisoner of War. It is available at www.code-of-conduct.com.

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California Plane Crash Kills Former POW

LOS ANGELES, Nov. 10, 2007

(AP) A small plane crashed in California's Central Valley on Friday, killing a former Vietnam prisoner of war and two others.

Cole Black, a former Navy captain from Escondido, was aboard the twin-engine plane that crashed in an orange grove in a rural area near

Delano, his wife, Karen Black, told The Associated Press in a telephone interview from her home.

Also aboard were Bruce Klein, who lives in Oregon and owns several pizza restaurants, and Sally S. Wilson, a retired school teacher from Oakland, the News-Review newspaper in Oregon reported.

The plane was being piloted by Klein, the paper reported.

Black, 74, was heading home after speaking to students in Oregon this week about his experience as a POW.

The Piper Aerostar 602P took off from Roseburg, Ore., about 75 miles southwest of Eugene, said Teresa Hitchcock, a spokeswoman for Meadows Field Airport in Bakersfield.

It was heading to McClellan Palomar Airport in north San Diego County to drop off Black, his wife said.

The crash was being investigated by the National Transportation Safety Board and the Federal Aviation Administration.

Black was flying an F-8 Crusader when he was shot down over North Vietnam in 1966. He was jailed in a torturous prisoner of war camp nicknamed the Hanoi Hilton for nearly seven years.

At a 1993 reunion marking the 20-year anniversary of the POWs' release, Black expressed regret over a flying maneuver that changed his life.

"If I had turned right instead of left, I wouldn't have got shot down. Everybody goes through life doing things you sometimes say, 'I shouldn't have done that.' The penalty isn't too bad in some cases but it was pretty bad in that case," Black was quoted saying in an AP story.

After the ordeal, Cole remained in the military and became executive officer of Marine Corps Air Station Miramar in San Diego, then a Naval attache for Mexico and Central America, Karen Black said.

After retiring from the military in 1986, Cole pursued a career in real estate. He spoke often to civic groups about his experience in Vietnam, and remained close with other POWs, said his wife.

"He was not bitter about what he went through," she said. "He was among a group of men who believed in honor and country."

Cole was to celebrate his 75th birthday Nov. 27, and his friends had been raising thousands of dollars to have his name painted on a plane he had flown on and is now displayed at the USS Midway Museum in San Diego.

"It would have been a nice tribute," she said.

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Dogs and Friends,

Yesterday was a football day for the rest of America, but for a few of us here in San Diego it was Cole Black's day...his send-off west.

As I pulled into the parking lot the only space available was next to a guy getting out of his car...Rich Reddich, who was an F-8 pilot in Cole's era, and who's daughter is an instructor WSO in the F-18 RAG. Right across the parking lot, getting out of their car were Jack and Kathy Enschede. We walked up to the long line outside the chapel together.

The line of people waiting to sign the guest book looked like a line-up of "who's who in Naval Aviation". There

were a lot of people from "our day", pilots of all kinds of fighters and Phantom/Tomcat RIOs. Our good pal Guy Freeborn and Jenny were there. Karen was outside greeting the people in the line as they waited to sign the book. She told me to go on down front, that there was a reserved section for Cole's XPOW friends. I did, and there were about 20 of the FOGS there. Jack and I were the only FNGs. Three large wreaths were placed to the far left, on stands. Two were from Karen and from the family members, and the other one read "GBU, 4th Allied POW Wing". On a stand just off-center was a very large color picture of Cole in his service-dress whites, cap, looking directly at the camera, with that little smile. An organist was playing a beautiful medley of inspirational songs.

The chaplain was a Navy Captain. Promptly at 1300 he asked us to stand. A military detail of nine sailors rolled the casket up to the front of the chapel, then too their places in the right front three rows, beside some of the FOGs. The funeral directors turned the casket cross-wise to the congregation with Cole's head to our left, and centered it. It was draped in the American flag, and remained closed.

A woman soloist sang "You are the wind beneath my wings". Lots of tiny tears...

Karen spoke first, and told us how she and Cole met, and how she immediately sensed the "gentle" man she'd just met. The next day she told a co-worker she'd just met the man she was going to marry.

The chaplain introduced a line-up of speakers which included three long-time friends of Cole's, (Bobby Hulse was one) including one childhood friend from his hometown in Minnesota, and two FOGS (Karen had asked me if I wanted to say a few words but I felt unworthy to do so, so I didn't). All the speakers had very warm and tender thoughts of Cole to express to us. All were very good, and all stressed Cole's gentle nature and good heartedness.

The soloist sang "Amazing Grace", a cappella.

The chaplain then delivered a brief "soft-sermon", and asked us to "remain in the spirit" of the occasion as we went outside. We sang the Navy Hymn as the honor guard and pall bearers rolled the casket outside, then we followed.

Outside, chairs had been set up on the lawn and the casket was centered in front of them. We all gathered around in a large semi-circle. There was a 21 gun salute by a rifle squad, TAPS by a bugler, and a flag-folding by two sailors. One of the sailors took the flag to Karen and knelt to present it to her. AT THE INSTANT both of them had their hands on the flag, four F-18s came over and did the "Missing Man" tribute. The timing could NOT have been better. At that point, at least two of the XPOWs "lost it"... I know, I saw them. I was standing next to one, and the other one was wearing my clothes...

The chaplain invited the family to come forward and place long-stem roses on the casket and bid their final farewells, and one-by-one, they did. Karen and some others kissed the casket.

The casket was then rolled out to the front of the chapel by the detail of sailors, and after it was loaded into the hearse the funeral director invited us all to come to the O-Club. I stopped to speak to the chaplain. His name is Johnny Poole, and he's from Mississippi. I told him I was from Tennessee, and I loved listening to his voice---..., with that typical deep, resonant, melodious quality, perfect English, and a soft, southern accent---... He did an absolutely perfect job, conducting the entire service with total dignity and grace.

On the way to the O-Club I stopped to get two roles of nickles.

At the club two bars were set up in the main dining room, along with a superb buffet. Another bar was set-up outside. There was a large screen set-up and a continuous slide-show of Cole's ventures played. People did what people do on occasions like that. I handed out nickles to the guys I knew, and to the ones I didn't know if they were wearing wings. After about an hour an a half I wandered outside to talk to friends out there, and shortly about twenty people came out to throw nickles. Jack Enschede and a few others knew the words so we sang "Throw a nickle on the grass" and the people threw the nickles. The word got out, and a group of about 15 family members came out. I gave them nickles, Jack and I sang again, and they threw nickles. We had two more songs and throws, then made an announcement for EVERYBODY who wanted to throw a nickle to come out to the grass. About 60 came out and Jack and I sang one last time.

Within a few minutes it was all over, and the place was empty. It was about 1630. I gave Karen a hug and reminded her that her POW family was right here for her, and asked if she got everything she wanted in preparation for, and from, the service. She was totally satisfied with all the assistance and support she had gotten from the CO of MCAS Miramar. In my mind, it couldn't have been better, or more nicely done, in any respect.

ODF...and our friends too,
SecDog

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[More info](#)