



Frederick Sheppard Gersh

May 24, 1936 - April 5, 2012

Fred Gersh Bio – Draft – 10 April, 2012

On the morning of April 5, 2012, Frederick Sheppard Gersh passed away surrounded by his family following a long and difficult battle with prostate cancer. Fred Gersh was born on May 24, 1936 in Portsmouth, NH to Ida Checkoway Gersh and Benjamin Gersh. He attended Portsmouth High School and graduated from The Tilton School in Tilton, NH in 1954. Fred then attended the University of New Hampshire (UNH) in Durham, NH where he graduated in 1959 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Mechanical Engineering. While at UNH Fred met and fell in love with fellow UNH student Maxine "Micki" Leavy of Plainfield, NJ. They were married the week after graduation. Fred also participated in UNH's Air Force ROTC program, from which he received his commission as a Second Lieutenant in 1959. With his wife Micki by his side, Fred went on to have a distinguished 27-year career in the Air Force's civil engineering field. The following is summary of his Air Force service.

- 1960 – 1400th Installations Squadron, Keflavik Airport, Keflavik, Iceland
- 1961-1962 – 1360th Civil Engineering Squadron, Orlando AFB, Orlando, Florida
- 1963-1966 – 61st Military Airlift Wing, Hickam AFB, Honolulu, Hawaii
- 1966-1969 – 1095th Support Squadron, Defense Atomic Support Agency, Bossier Base, Bossier City, Louisiana
- 1969-1970 – 819th Civil Engineering Squadron (Heavy Repair – RED HORSE), Phu Cat AB, and Headquarters 7th Air Division Civil Engineering Directorate, Tan Son Nhut AB, Republic of Vietnam
- 1970-1974 – Directorate of Civil Engineering, Headquarters Air Force Logistics Command, Wright-Patterson AFB, Dayton, Ohio
- 1974-1975 – Graduate Student earning a Master's degree in Facilities Management, Air Force Institute of Technology, Wright-Patterson AFB, Dayton, Ohio
- 1975-1976 – Directorate of Engineering and Services, Headquarters U.S. Air Forces in Europe, Ramstein Air Base, West Germany
- 1976-1979 – Einsiedlerhof Base Civil Engineer, 86th Civil Engineering Squadron, Einsiedlerhof Air Station, Kaiserslautern, West Germany
- 1979-1983 – Air Force Regional Civil Engineer, Directorate of Engineering and Services,

Headquarters Air Forces in Europe at West Ruislip, England

• 1983-1986 – Commander, 1100th Civil Engineering Squadron, Bolling AFB, Washington, DC

Fred retired as a Colonel in the US Air Force on June 30, 1986. His major military service awards and decorations included the Legion of Merit with oak leaf cluster (OLC), Bronze Star Medal, Meritorious Service Medal with OLC, Air Force Commendation Medal, Air Force Outstanding Unit Award ribbon with "Valor" device and four OLCs, National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, Republic of Vietnam Honor Medal 1st class and Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with palm

From June 1986 to October 1987 Fred served under contract with the U.S. Department of State supporting U.S. embassy facilities maintenance programs and projects worldwide within the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations.

From October 1987 to January 2004 Fred worked in the University of Maryland in College Park in Capital Projects Facilities Management. Fred was involved in many programs and projects including the Performing Arts Center and athletic and academic support facilities at six of the eleven campuses of the University of Maryland system.

Fred was a fierce advocate for Prostate Cancer awareness and Veterans' Health after his exposure to Agent Orange during his service in Vietnam. His efforts ranged from tireless one-on-one support, informative and encouraging documentation and videos for patients, their families and caregivers to personally addressing members of Congress on the need for increased funding for cancer-related programs. Fred was recognized for his advocacy efforts when received the 2010 Outstanding Advocate Award from US TOO International, a non-profit prostate cancer education and support network of 325 support group chapters worldwide. Since 1992 and in earnest in 2004 Fred has devoted his time to many volunteer efforts associated with Prostate Cancer and Veterans' Health. Fred served as the "Us Too" Prostate Cancer Support Group Leader and Facilitator (<http://www.ustoo.org/>) at the Inova Alexandria Hospital in Alexandria, Virginia for twenty years from 1992 to 2012. From 2005 to 2012 Fred was a member of the Board of Directors of the Virginia Prostate Cancer Coalition (<http://vapcacoalition.org/>). As a representative for the Us Too International Prostate Cancer Education and Support Network, Fred served on three national committees: Cancer Leadership Council (<http://www.cancerleadership.org/>) which is a patient-centered forum of national advocacy organizations addressing public policy issues in cancer, One Voice Against Cancer (<http://www.oivaonline.org/>) which is a coalition of national non-profit organizations that effectively lobbies Congress and the White House on the need for increased funding for essential cancer-related programs, and the Veterans Health Council

(<http://www.veteranshealth.org/>) which is an alliance dedicated to providing veterans with resources to help them make their way through the red tape that can be a barrier to obtaining Veterans Administration (VA) benefits and healthcare. They are also providing veterans with easy access to information linking illnesses with the areas of service to which VA has attributed those conditions with the goal of drawing in veterans who are entitled to VA benefits but are unaware of it.

Although an Air Force veteran, Fred worked hard for the benefits of all military veterans, especially groups like Blue Water Navy (www.bluewaternavy.org). An organization dedicated for United States Navy, Coast Guard and Fleet Marine services who fought in Vietnam and currently suffer disabilities from the effects of dioxin, found in Agent Orange

Fred was known for his amazing energy, drive, and his generosity sharing his smile and origami cranes.

Always looking for ways to connect with people, Fred became inspired by a friendly young woman on a train ride in Japan. In just a few stops she had folded an Origami crane. Fascinated with her delicate and speedy folds, Fred made an effort to learn this skill for himself. He loved to share the story of the Sadako Sasaki and the thousand paper cranes and its healing powers with anyone who gave him time.

Fred is survived by the following family.

- His wife of 52 years, Maxine "Micki" who resides in Alexandria, Virginia
- His three sons
 - o Mark Gersh, his wife Bernadette, and their daughter Jordan who reside in Redwood City, California,
 - o Robert Gersh, his wife Susan Horowitz, their daughter Shira, and their son Avram who reside in Bath, Maine, and
 - o Benjamin Gersh who resides in Moody, Alabama
- His brother, Milton Gersh, who presently lives in Sarasota, Florida
- His sister, Joan Hankin and her husband Neil who reside in Madison, Alabama

Comments



“ 1 file added to the album Obituary Wall



Jefferson Funeral Chapel - January 28 at 09:37 AM



“ Micki, Vivian and I were so saddened to hear of Fred's death. Our thoughts and prayers are with you. May God grant you special strength, and may Fred's memory be for a blessing.

July 29, 2012 at 12:00 AM



“ Renee and David are sad to hear of your loss. Fred and Micki were members of our congregation in Germany.

July 25, 2012 at 12:00 AM



“ I am so sorry for your loss. I am sure you have many fine memories of your loved one that will bring you a measure of comfort during these trying times. Our loving heavenly Father is the "God of all comfort" and he can and will help you through this difficult time because "he cares for you." (1 Peter 5:7)

July 09, 2012 at 12:00 AM



“ I met Fred at the Alexandria INOVA Hospital at a cancer survivor meeting. He was a very inspiring individual and always had an encouraging word for everyone. He will be greatly missed.

June 10, 2012 at 12:00 AM



“ I knew Fred for a few short months. Durning that time I saw him take an interest in each of the newly diagnosed he spoke with. The focus that he brought to each man's situation was crisp and definitive. He conducted himself like the true professional he was. The people he was helping were not exposed to any of the difficulties that he must have been having with his own treatment. He conveyed positive attitude in every in discussion I ever had with Fred. He inspired us all with the sacrifice he made to bring us all up-to-speed, educating us in the all the topics dealing with our own PCa issues. He gave us hope for a better future through the his exposure to the research activities that he brought to our attention. What a guy to have known; what a hero to us all.

April 25, 2012 at 12:00 AM



“ As I look through our old family photos, I am reminded of what a gift it has been to have had Fred in our life. I will always remember him for the passion that he maintained throughout his life and the unwavering bravery he demonstrated in his final months, weeks and days. Even in his final week of life, he pulled Jordan close and shared his thoughts on parenting and leadership as only Fred could do. We will miss you Fred.

April 24, 2012 at 12:00 AM



“ so sorry for your loss. Our thoughts are with you Lynda and Peter

April 21, 2012 at 12:00 AM



“ Grandpa, I'm so happy to have had a grandfather like you. You'll forever be in my memories as the man I taught origami to when I was little. I'll miss you and I'll always love you, Grandpa.

April 15, 2012 at 12:00 AM



“ We are privileged to have known Fred even for a short time. We enjoyed visiting and having an occasional lunch with Fred and Micki when they would come to the West Coast for a visit with Mark, Bernie and Jordan. He was a warrior and an inspiration to many. We will always remember his smile and hearty laugh.

April 14, 2012 at 12:00 AM