

## LT RICHARD (DICK) MARRACK

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Dick was just about the first friend I had when I arrived at the squadron from the Training Command. He and I were relegated to the NAS Norfolk BOQ because we were both bachelors. At that time, 1960, the Navy would not spring for BAQ for bachelors. So there we were and we shared that misery.

In a few months time the squadron was deployed to Sigonella Sicily. Dick and I roomed together. He was a P2V driver and a darn good one. He flew and I stood watches as SDO. We were able to put up with each others shenanigans in those close quarters so became good friends. He was an easy guy to get along with. Many evenings we spent drinking a little wine and playing chess, where he always won. There wasn't a heck of a lot to do over there except work but that made the time go by quickly.

Dick was one of the trio with Pat O'Leary and me, who took leave and rode the train up to Garmisch/Partinkirschen Germany. That story is in the Pat O'Leary bio. It was a great trip.

After Sigonella the squadron was moved lock, stock and Barrel, up to NAS Patuxent River Maryland where we were again moved into the BOQ. This was a dreary, dilapidated WWI structure and we were not happy. Somehow, after a few months, the Navy relented and granted us BAQ. That was a great day. Dick and I found temporary quarters off base which were even worse than the BOQ but we were away from it and that was all that mattered.

We finally found an old cabin on Chesapeake Bay which we named "*The Ranch*" and moved into it. It was cold in the winter and hot in the summer but we liked it.

The thing about Dick was that he was a true daredevil. He purchased a J5 Piper Cub and started flying it. Soon he had me in it and was teaching me to fly the thing. He also found an old sewing machine somewhere and started sewing in a couple of old parachutes. I soon learned why he was teaching me to fly the Cub. He wanted someone to fly it and take him up so he could jump out of it.

One of his exploits that tells of his quick thinking abilities as a pilot happened at a little grass strip south of the base. The plane had been sitting out all winter and Dick wanted to take it up for a test drive. He dutifully checked the tank for water, did the preflight and took off into the blue. He got up to about 50 feet or so when the engine conked out. I thought he was going in but no, the engine started going full throttle and then dieing out again over and over. Dick was able to slowly turn the plane to the 180 and took it downwind like that. He managed to land the thing and then the engine stopped completely. After he got out I asked him what happened. He said there must have been water in the tank even though he drained the plug on the preflight. He said he used the engine prime all the way around. The engine would run when he pushed in on the prime and stop when he had to pull the primer out again for the next push. Dick surmised that he should have raised the tail to a level position and drained the tank prior to flying. It

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was a tail dragger so the nose was tilted upward which left a pocket of water in the tank. That was a scary event but Dick neatly averted disaster by quick thinking.

I believe it was Pat O'Leary who approached us and asked if we would consider moving to a new place with him and Ron Schug called "*Not Yet.*" Well, this was a mansion compared to our hovel. It was on the bay near Lexington Park. It was a great place. Dick shared it with Pat O'Leary, Jon Lund, Ron Schug, Dale Strickland and me. It was big enough for all of us.

Soon I was flying well enough that he started jumping out of the Cub. We would go up to 2500 feet over a landing zone and Dick would nonchalantly walk out of the airplane. It wasn't long before he started on Jon Lund and me to jump also. He kept telling us what a great thrill it was to do this and that we would love it. Well, one thing led to another. Jon and I dared each other and that led to our trying it out. I got the short straw and went first. All went ok. Jon went next. That was good also. I went again and messed up somehow because the chute risers got twisted near the ground. I hit like a ton of bricks and ended up with a slight leg fracture. This led to a few stories.

The next thing I knew, Dick informed us all that he was getting married. He had been seeing a Baltimore debutante named Linda Glidden. He got married up in Baltimore with Pat O'Leary as the best man. It wasn't long after that when he was transferred from the squadron to the training command.

All of us "*Not Yet*" guys missed old Dick.

Long after the Navy, I wrote a letter to Dick because I had not heard from him in quite a while. After a short time I received a phone call from Linda. She told me that Dick had Died. This was in 1987. At that time he was a pilot for Eastern Airlines. She said that he had been flying to Salt Lake City in Utah when he became very ill. Upon landing they rushed him to the hospital where he expired. He had somehow contracted hepatitis. Linda thought that he caught it from doing some maintenance work on an apartment building that he owned. It was really a shock and a shame because he was so young. I also learned from Linda that Dick had taken up parachute jumping again a year or two before his death. As I said, he was a true daredevil.

Dick was a natural pilot qualified in both P2 and P3 aircraft, a good friend, a ruthless chess player and dare devil. He was quite a guy.

Les Dennis CDR USNR RET