



Wilbur Joseph Etbauer

October 17, 1943 - August 2, 2018

Wil Etbauer, age 74, passed away peacefully with his wife and daughter by his side at his residence in Waldorf, Maryland on August 2, 2018.

Born October 17, 1943 in Chamberlain, South Dakota, Wil graduated from Wessington Springs High School in 1961 and went on to complete a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering at South Dakota State University. He worked briefly at Cable Printing Company in Mount Morris, Illinois, then was drafted for the Vietnam War in June of 1967. He completed four weeks of basic training, then transferred to Air Force Officers Training School at Lackland AFB in Texas. In October of that same year, he married Joan Amanda Stofferahn of Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Wil and Joan moved to their first military assignment at the Space and Missile Systems Organization (SAMSO) in Los Angeles, California. There they were stationed for five years, then transferred to Vandenberg AFB also in California where Wil worked on the Scout Missile System and they stayed for four years. In 1976, Wil was transferred to Headquarters ADCOM to work on the PAVE PAW System in Colorado Springs, Colorado, where their only daughter, Kristin, was born that next year. In August of 1979, the family moved to Norfolk, Virginia where Wil attended the Armed Forces Staff College, then was transferred to work at the Lynden B. Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas, a joint program with the Air Force and NASA that facilitated the Space Shuttle Program. Then in 1983, Wil became the Vice Commander for Satellite Test Operations at Onizuka Air

Force Base in Sunnyvale, California. There the family was stationed for six and a half years until Wil was promoted to full Colonel and assigned to be a Deputy Program Manager for the new space and missile warning system, referred to as ASAT, at Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville, Alabama. In 1993, Wil retired from the military and went to work for Vista Technologies, Inc. as their Vice President until 1997 when he started work with DESE Research, Inc. still in Huntsville, Alabama. Wil worked at DESE Research for 16 years, eventually retiring as their Senior Vice President and Operations Manager. In 2015, Wil and Joan moved to Waldorf, Maryland to be close to their daughter and son-in-law after spending 25 years in Huntsville.

Wil was known by those closest to him as unfailingly kind and a true gentleman. He didn't usually have a lot to say, but when he did, it was either pivotally important or hilariously funny. Wil was a voracious reader and while he had a great intellect and was knowledgeable on many subjects, he was always humble and never arrogant – making it possible for him to have friends in many different walks of life. He was a true lover of the game of golf – both playing it when he could and later watching it on TV. A life-long supporter of the lively arts, he enjoyed all manner of music and theatre, especially those during their time in Huntsville, Alabama. Also, Wil adored travel. He and Joan were blessed to go on many international cruises and tours, eventually making it to countries in Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean.

Wil is preceded in death by his parents, Raymond Joseph and Dorothy Maye (Anderson) Etbauer and brother, Dennis Ray Etbauer.

He is survived by his wife of 50 years, Joan Etbauer; daughter and son-in-law Kristin and Timothy Wiener of Waldorf, Maryland; sister-in-law, Marilyn Etbauer of Rochester, Minnesota; mother-in-law, Barbara Stofferahn of Sioux Falls, South Dakota; brothers of his wife and sisters-in-law, Gary and LeeAnn Stofferahn of DeSmet, South Dakota, Terry Stofferehn of Lake Norden, South

Dakota, and Ken and Pam Stofferahn of Ridgway, Colorado. He will also be grieved and remembered by his nieces and nephews, extended family, friends, and former colleagues.

It was Wil's desire to be cremated and have his remains interred at the columbarium at Arlington National Cemetery. A date for a funeral mass in Waldorf, Maryland and Interment Service will follow at a later date.

In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation to Catholic Charities (catholiccharities.org).

Cemetery Details

Arlington National Cemetery

Arlington, VA

Tribute Wall



“ *Wilbur Joseph Etbauer*

October 08, 2023 at 10:45 PM



“ *Wilbur Joseph Etbauer*

October 04, 2023 at 03:12 PM



“ *Joan,*

This is Don Sheets, and I was an administrative clerk at the Scout Missile Office, where I worked with your husband. I always knew he would become a Colonel in the Air Force. He was always kind and respectful to me when I was a young SSgt. I still have the plaque that was given to me at my going away party. I look at it and remember the great people I worked with while at Vandenberg AFB.

I retired in 1989 and moved to Portland, Oregon. I came here to attend school and completed my undergrad and graduate degrees. Both Susan and I have worked for many years in the social service field and foster parented many children. Susan and I have now been married close to 48 years. She sends her best.

It was a privilege to know Colonel Etbauer (I can't help but want to say Captain Etbauer). He was a great officer, and I considered him a friend.

*Don Sheets
donmsgtret89@gmail.com*

Donald Sheets - July 29, 2021 at 12:38 AM

DH

“ April 18, 2021

Hi Joan:

I cannot express the sadness that came over me upon reading of Wilbur's death in the SDSU Alumni "State" magazine in 2018. I wanted, so badly, to send my condolences at that time, but had no idea as to how I could contact you or your daughter. In fact, that publication contained my first notice that you were no longer living in Alabama. (I was unaware of this web site.)

The enjoyable times I spent with you and Wilbur were, and always will be, among my fondest memories of SDSU while I festered during the days of my wasted youth. Fortunately, my recollections of Wilbur's favorable traits and habits had a significant influence on my conduct (all for the better, of course) during my post-college years and, subsequently, when I eventually converted myself (I think) into an adult. In any event, please know that you and Wilbur are remembered dearly in my most enjoyable memories and, although horribly delinquent, I send you and your family my deepest sympathies, along with my kind and loving thoughts.

Kindest regards,

/S/ Darrel

P.S. My sadness over Wilbur's death was further deepened upon learning of Dennis' death a few months prior. I hope that Marilyn is also doing well, and I intend to extend my condolences to her as well.

P. P.S. I would love to hear from you and, if you are so inclined, you may find my contact information at the web site of the State Bar of California (CalBar.org). Or, you may take my last name, combine it with "law" into one word, and send your message via gmail, i.e., "XXXXlaw@gmail.com."

Darrel Horsted - April 18, 2021 at 05:13 PM



“ *Just learned from this site that Wil had passed away. I worked in the same area as did Wil at NASA. I was very impressed with Wil's ability to take an important but not very well defined problem and come up with very insightful ideas. May he rest in peace.*

Kerry Soileau - March 01, 2020 at 10:16 AM

PB

“ *Dear Joan,
I happened to speak to Lisa Rogers (DESE Research) this afternoon and she told me of Wil's passing. Those words were heart breaking. Terry and I offer our sincere condolences.
Phil and Terry Bragg
Huntsville, AL
(28 August 2018)*

Philip Bragg - August 28, 2018 at 03:54 PM