



Michael Edward Coonrod

July 1, 1947 - November 20, 2019

Michael Edward Coonrod of Little Shasta passed away on November 20, 2019, while laughing with his close friend. Mike was born on July 1, 1947, in Yreka, CA. He was the oldest son of Donald and Star I. Coonrod, both of Little Shasta.

Mike grew up on the family cattle ranch and learned all aspects of ranching from working and doctoring cattle to operating all the farm equipment. Mike graduated from Yreka High School in 1965. While in high school he was a member of the gymnastics team, with his specialty being the pommel horse.

After graduation from high school Mike attended College of the Siskiyous for two years and graduated in 1968 with an Associate of Arts degree. While in college, he started his flying career and obtained his private pilot's license in 1967. During this period, he continued to work on the family cattle ranch, as well as being a logger, cat skinner, and timber faller.

In 1968 Mike joined the U.S. Army where he continued his education in aviation, graduating from Army Rotary Wing Flight School in 1969, and U.S. Army Vietnam Instructor Pilot School in 1970.

In 1969-1970 Mike was sent to Vietnam for two tours of duty. He was Command Pilot for the 162nd Assault Helicopter Company flying UH1H

("Huey") helicopters, where he earned the rank of Chief Warrant Officer.

Of all the missions Mike flew in Vietnam, one stood out. He was flying the lead helicopter in a fleet of five transport helicopters, landing in what was supposed to be a friendly landing zone. Upon landing, he came under intense enemy machine gun fire. While still under heavy enemy fire, Mike waited for his seriously wounded troops to re-board the aircraft and flew directly to a medical unit in Binh Thuy. It was there where it was found over 40 bullets had penetrated the nose of the aircraft alone. Mike was the only survivor. Mike later told his brother, Tim, "I never knew a shot up Huey could do 140 knots!" which was well over the maximum rated speed of that aircraft.

Mike was a true American hero, but most people never knew that, as he was a humble man without a big ego. During his tour of duty in Vietnam Mike was awarded the following decorations:

- National Defense Service Medal
- Vietnam Campaign Medal - three awards
- Army Commendation Medal - two awards
- 52 Air Medals
- Distinguished Flying Cross
- Bronze Star
- Purple Heart
- Valorous Unit Ribbon

After his release from the Army, he continued his aviation career and education, graduating in 1974 from the V.A. Rotor Wing Commercial Flight School at the University of Nevada. He then pursued work, flying crop dusting helicopters in Missouri, and later flying for Erling Hjertager, who leased out both Mike and his Bell 47G3B1 helicopter to Temsco Helicopters of Ketchikan, Alaska.

Mike then went to work for Temsco Helicopters, where he flew helicopters for 26 years. Mike was well respected for his mastery of helicopters and was very often specifically requested as the pilot by many different clients of Temsco. Among his many assignments, his main ones were flying for the mining industry, oil exploration, and fire fighting. His favorite flying assignment was taking geologists out to remote areas of Alaska.

Mike retired from his flying career in 2000 and returned to his home on the family cattle ranch where he lived until his death.

Mike was preceded in death by both of his parents, Donald and Star Coonrod, and his brother, Patrick Robert Coonrod, all of Little Shasta.

Mike is survived by his daughter Roxanne Star Coonrod, his sister Donna Rolph and husband Donald, his brother Timothy and wife Kristine, nieces, nephews, great nieces and nephews, and numerous cousins.

A memorial celebration will be held at Little Shasta Church on December 20, 2019, at 1:00, with interment in Little Shasta Cemetery to follow.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to The Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association by calling 1-800-505-8472 or by mailing a check to VHPA Endowment, 2100 N. Highway 360, Suite 907, Grand Prairie, TX 75050 or to any other Veterans Services Organization of your choice.

Cemetery Details

Little Shasta Cemetery

1412 Harry Cash Road
Montague, CA 96064

Previous Events

Memorial Service

DEC **20**. 1:00 PM (PT)

Little Shasta Church
Lower Little Shasta Road
Montague, CA

Tribute Wall



“ *Uncle Mike was a unique guy. Ultimately he was really mellow about life and that was pretty cool. I never heard him raise his voice or say anything negative about anyone. He had a quirky smile and a twinkle in his eyes. And he was a heck of a pilot. My condolences to all his loved ones.*

Jan Coonrod - December 22, 2019 at 02:40 AM

RW

“ *Fellow rotor head and warrior, we'll fly together again someday!*



Ron Whipple - December 10, 2019 at 02:39 PM

 Tom Cook

“ *RIP Sir! A Brother in Arms.*

Tom Cook - December 05, 2019 at 07:12 PM

JR

“ *Jim Leach Cw2 Retired lit a candle in memory of Michael Edward Coonrod*



Jim leach cw2 retired - November 29, 2019 at 09:21 AM

DS

“ *David Sylva lit a candle in memory of Michael Edward Coonrod*



David Sylva - November 26, 2019 at 08:40 PM