

Billy Joe Ellis

F-105 History

30-Jun-61

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The third F-105D operational training Class 61L, Course 111506E, graduated 15 pilots in the 4520 CCTW at Nellis AFB NV. The class began training on 1 May 1961 and was attached to the 4526 CCTS commanded by Lt Col James Ellis Bean. The graduates were:

Col Carroll L. Stanton - 36 TFW DO
Maj Elmer E. "Dutch" Springer, Jr. - 36 TFW, 23 TFS commander
Maj Robert F. Titus - from WPAFB
Capt Dennis O. Boyle - 36 TFW
Capt Billy J. Ellis - 36 TFW
Capt John E. Hill - 36 TFW
Capt Loraine R. Ivins - from Ramstein AB, Germany
Capt William Perry "Robby" Robinson - from Cannon AFB
Capt John G. Siran - 36 TFW
Capt Richard D. Vogel
Capt Joseph R. Steen - from Cannon AFB
1Lt John L. Goodfleisch - 36 TFW
1Lt Kenneth J. Mason - from Cannon AFB
1Lt Norman E. Powell - 36 TFW 22 TFS
1Lt Vincent P. Roy - 36 TFW

Norm Powell, who had flown F-100s at Williams and Nellis and had been assigned to the 22 TFS on October 1960, recalled his introduction to the F-105 at Nellis. "In April 1961, the 22nd TFS at Bitburg was slated to be the first in Europe to receive the shiny new Republic Ultrahog, giving up our F-100Cs for the F-105D, with which to defend the forces of freedom and democracy by sitting on Victor alert loaded with a Mk-28 in the bomb bay. Imagine! A 'fighter' with a 17' internal bomb bay...

"In due course, I was at Nellis to check out in the new 'weapons system.' As there was then no two-seat 'F' model, and after a few simulator sessions, we suited up in a 'D' model with an IP flying chase. On my third ride in the airplane, I was slated for a maximum performance climb to altitude, followed by a speed run to Mach 2. I led my chase IP during a water-injected take off and afterburner climb to 37,000,' leveling off and turning south near St. George, Utah. While leaving the AB plugged in and watching the duct plugs unlock and drive forward in the intakes, I was astounded that the bird accelerated smartly to Mach 2.1, with apparently more in reserve. This was a clean bird, however, and soon the fuel gauge said it was time to come out of 'burner and go home. The Dash 1 said not to retard the throttle below full mil until below Mach 1.3 to avoid duct instability and compressor stalls. Not wanting to use the speed brakes, which probably resulted in a close encounter with the instrument panel, I flew a climbing chandelle to decelerate. Suddenly I was at 52,000" with my O2 mask fluttering and slapping my face as it insisted I should be pressure-breathing! Then I remembered that the cabin pressure had to be off while the water injection lasted (36 gallons, or about one minute), and this dumb 2nd Lieutenant had failed to come out of RAM and turn on pressurization after take off. Yeah, the airplane was swiftly outrunning my dazzled brain.

"There may be others, particularly those who only knew the Thud during the combat years, who doubt that the Thunderchief was capable of attaining Mach 2+. I can attest that it certainly was! Indeed, the design competition with the North American F-107 required a Mach 2 demonstration. It must be remembered, however, that this was in 1961 and I was in a unpainted, clean 'D' (paint added 150 pounds and a drag index equal to one 450-gal tank), before the endless 'upgrades,' safety packs, RHAW antennas, structural patches, arresting hook, and so forth that continually added weight and drag by the time of the SEA unpleasantness. (Norm Powell, story in the E-Newsletter of the F-105 Pilots Association, FINAL EDITION - Issue Number 4 - October 12, 2011, THE SUPERFAST ULTRAHOG - BY NORM POWELL")

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Norm Powell recalled another F-105 experience during his Nellis training. "... During our initial checkout in the Thud at Nellis in 1961, one mission entailed a practice ferry high flight with 3 gas bags & a "strange field" stop at Luke AFB, AZ. After restocking the birds with fuel & the pilots with burgers from the flight line roach coach, we taxied out to return to Nellis. We were taking off single-ship because of the "heavy weight" configuration. (These were shiny-new D-models with two 450 gal. wing tanks and a 450 gal. belly tank, not really that heavy compared to the later Weasel "G" with a 650 on the belly) I was #3, took my 15 second spacing, wiped the cockpit with the stick, lit the 'burner and rolled.

"As rotation speed passed, I eased the stick back... uh oh, it's awfully stiff. I know the Thud's controls are a bit heavy but this is ridiculous. Pull harder, still no movement, WTF? Oh yeah, maybe oughta come out of 'burner, the distance-to-go markers are dwindling to a precious few. As my brain is calmly & methodically reviewing the bold-face abort procedure: Throttle-idle: Off for fire and emergency brake-pull... my gonads and the seat cushion are being drawn up into the anal regions and my feet are doing their own thing. The anti-skid system had been de-activated on these birds because of numerous malfunctions and I knew I had to be gentle with the brakes at these speeds, but I ground through 22 plies of tire and much of the wheels in the first couple of seconds. The drag chute worked (We didn't have a tail hook until much later) and I started trying to aim for the arresting barrier. This was the old MA-1 anchor-chain-dragging system which used a tennis-net-like webbing to catch the nose gear and toss a cable up in front of the main gear. I could aim the nose with the nosewheel steering, but that had little effect on the path of the aircraft, sliding on molten magnesium wheels as if on ice. I struck the barrier well off-center, failed to get an engagement, perhaps because of the belly tank I failed to jettison, and sailed off into the Arizona dirt at the north end. I vividly remember gouts of dirt being thrown up & forward by the "walking" gear struts like spray at the bow of a ski boat. Finally we shuddered to a halt and the cockpit went dark as all that airborne dirt settled on the canopy. I motored the canopy open and was much relieved to see no fire.

"Eventually, an O-10 fire truck drew alongside so I could deplane onto its roof. (I hadn't yet learned the trick of stepping out onto the intake, down the back of the fuselage to the tail, down the speed brake hinge bosses to the stabilator & off onto the ground) The full 450 centerline tank was about 3 inches off the ground but undamaged.

"The investigation revealed that a expansion-bolt-like device called a "Seal Plug" had been dislodged from above the engine by the shock of the AB light, had rattled down around the engine and lodged in the Pitch Mechanical Advantage Shifter. This is the inter-meshing conglomeration of quadrants, linkages, & wormdrive motor that varies the amount of stabilizer travel per inch of stick movement as your speed changes. ...

"I (2/Lts are always guilty) was assessed a contributing factor in the accident, not for my size 10 Brogans, but because, they said, had I pushed forward on the stick, the offending object would have probably fallen out & I would have regained control. Somehow, pushing forward was one of the last things on my mind..." (Norm Powell, story in the E-Newsletter Thunder Falcon, Issue Number 7, Jan 2012, Norm Powell editor.)

Billy J. Ellis had graduated from West Point in 1951. He then, "... entered basic pilot training at Greenville Air Force Base, Miss. This was followed by advanced pilot training at Bryan Air Force Base, Texas, where he received his pilot wings in June 1952. He then attended fighter gunnery school at Orlando Air Force Base, Fla. ... In December 1952, ... Ellis was assigned to South Korea with the 8th Fighter-Bomber Squadron and accumulated 253 combat hours in F-84s. Upon his return to the United States in September 1953, he was assigned as flight commander and gunnery instructor with the 3604th Flying Training Squadron at Luke Air Force Base, Ariz.

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"While at Luke he was selected to fly with the Thunderbirds in May 1955 and was an original member of the world's first supersonic aerobatic team when the team received the F-100 aircraft in 1956."

When he returned to Bitburg after F-105 training, Capt Ellis was assigned to the 22 TFS, "... the first overseas squadron to transition to F-105s."

4520 CCTW History, Jan - Jun 61, USAF microfilm MO2195, Special Order AA-1 & Norm Powell, e-mail 3 Jan 2012 & Ellis bio at <http://www.af.mil/information/bios/bio.asp?bioID=5343>.

01-Jul-61

1539

As of 1 July 1961, the 22 TFS, 36 TFW, Bitburg AB, Germany, had the following key personnel:

Lt Col William H. Nelson, Commander;
Maj Richard O. Ransbottom, Operations Officer;
Capt Billy J. Ellis, Asst Operations Officer;
Capt Hugh H. Bowden, Intelligence Officer;
Capt Myron Ulrich, Maintenance Officer;
Capt Roderick Giffin, Special Weapons Officer;
Capt Dalton McCullar, "A" Flight Commander;
Capt Richard A. Dutton, "B" Flight Commander;
Capt William P. Robinson, "C" Flight Commander;
Capt John Haisty, "D" Flight Commander.

For part of July, the "Big 22" temporarily operated from Ramstein AB, due to runway construction at Bitburg.

History of 36 TFW, 1 July - 31 Dec 1961, USAF microfilm MO627, frame 0998.

25-Jun-62

1551

Approximately 124 Air Force Academy cadets of Cadet Squadron C-2 visited the 36 TFW at Bitburg AB, Germany. The cadets from the class of 1964 and their six faculty escort officers were "... On a field study tour of European nations to observe and study foreign Air Forces and the European political and economic situation."

Capt Billy J. Ellis, F-105 pilot from the 22 TFS, was the project officer for the day's activities. Other 36 TFW escort officers were 1Lt Richard W. Simons and 1Lt Paul B. Franz, also F-105 pilots from the 22 TFS. The cadets were briefed on the F-105, and "... saw a static display of the Thunderchief and its armament. They were also shown an F-105 harmonization demonstration (gun leveling firing)."

In August 1957, Ellis had been "... assigned to the U.S. Air Force Academy, Colo., where he served for three years with the 5th Cadet Squadron as air officer commanding."

36 TFW history, 1 Jan - 30 Jun 1962, USAF microfilm MO627, frames 1116 - 1117 Ellis bio at <http://www.af.mil/information/bios/bio.asp?bioID=5343>.

31-Dec-63

1655

The F-105D pilots from the 22 TFS, 36 TFW, who arrived or departed Bitburg AB, Germany, between July - Dec 1963 were:

Departed	Arrived
Capt Richard Allen Dutton	Capt Dean A. Elmer
Capt Rogher K. Parris	Capt John Regan
Capt Paul B. Franz	Capt Robert I. DeLong
Capt Billy J. Ellis	Capt Kenneth G. Frank
Capt Dalton W. McCullar, Jr.	Capt Frederick G. Tolman
Capt Vincent P. Roy	Capt Bruce Klein

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Capt Richard Vogel	Capt Robert C. Nelson
Capt Eugene Powell	Capt James R. Cook
Capt David Burnett Hatcher	Capt Joseph Piecuch
Capt Albert L. Logan	Capt Russell Boggs
Capt Frank Graham	Capt Frank Graham

Capt Elmer arrived in "mid 1963" from the 4 TFW at Seymour Johnson AFB. (Dean A. Elmer bio in Red River Valley Fighter Pilots Vol 1, pg 87.)

Lt Col Robert M. White arrived in October 1963 as squadron Operations Officer.

When he departed Bitburg in August 1963, Capt Billy J. Ellis entered Air Command and Staff College at Maxwell AFB, AL. "While there he also earned his master's degree from The George Washington University. ... In July 1964, ... Ellis was assigned to Langley Air Force Base, Va., as an F-105 flight examiner and assistant chief, Jet Flight Branch, with the 4450th Standardization Evaluation Group. During this assignment he went to Takhli Royal Thai Air Force Base, Thailand, with the first F-105 unit from Tactical Air Command [the 563 TFS]. "

Beginning in April 1964, Maj Richard A. Dutton was assigned to Nellis AFB as an academic instructor in the 4524 CCTS. (Dutton's bio at <http://veterantributes.org/TributeDetail.php?recordID=502>.)

36 TFW history, 1 Jul - 31 Dec 63, USAF microfilm MO627 frame 1534 & Ellis Bio at <http://www.af.mil/information/bios/bio.asp?bioID=5343>.

08-Apr-65

15-Aug-65

13

The 563 TFS from the 23 TFW, McConnell AFB KS, deployed eighteen F-105s to combat operations at Takhli RTAFB, Thailand, under "Operation Two Buck Charlie".

The squadron commander was Maj Jack F. Brown. Maj Everett Wayne Harris was the Operations Officer. Maj Billy J. Ellis was the Assistant Ops Officer. "After 51 combat missions, [Ellis] ... returned to Langley AFB in November 1965 and was assigned to Headquarters Tactical Air Command in the Directorate of Operations as F-105 weapon systems project officer. "

The F-105s left McConnell at 10:00 AM on 8 April 1965 with stops at Hickam AFB, Hawaii, and Andersen AFB, Guam.

Six pilots had departed with the Initial Support Team (IST) on 7 April. They were Capt Kile Dag "Red" Berg, Capt Jack L. Fowler, Capt Paul W. Hanson, Capt Thomas D. Scott, Capt Robert C. Wistrand, and Capt Charles N. "Charlie" Warner.

Eighteen more flew their F-105s on today's deployment. Seventeen of the pilots were:

Capt Robert Norlan Daughtrey	Capt Bill Sauers
Capt David L. Hrdlicka	Capt Kenneth C. Schow
Capt Robert Jackson	Capt Billy Reid Sparks, Jr.
Capt Kenneth Johnston	Capt Russell L. Violet
Capt Larry G. Lighty	Capt Richard D. Vogel
Capt Albert L. Logan	Capt Sam Woodworth
Capt Edward D. McCabe	Capt Martin V. Case, Jr.
Capt Craig Miller	Capt Robert R. Reed
Capt James M. Rhodes, Jr.	

The 23 TFW commander, Col Edmund B. Edwards, accompanied the squadron during this deployment. He remained at Takhli as Base Commander until July 1965, when he returned to

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McConnell for his reassignment to Hq 2nd Air Division at Tan Son Nhut. "He flew more than 40 combat sorties in the F-105 Thunderchief." (USAF Bio Brig Gen Edmund B. Edwards)

Capt Robert R. Reed deployed with the squadron but "... flew only three missions with the 563rd as I had orders to the 35 TFS in Yokota, Japan."

Capt Billy R. Sparks described the squadron's deployment. "The 563TFS, 23TFW, at McConnell were put on alert to deploy to an unknown base in SEA in early Feb. '65. We had been OR for about 6 months and thought we were heading to Japan until the alert orders. We sat around on our butts and tried to figure out what we were going to be doing. We heard that we would be flying combat missions in NVN and that's about all we knew. The siren hooted at 0'Dark-30 on 11 April and we went through a full deployment drill and then sat around for the rest of the day waiting to find out WTF0."

"We had just lost our Squadron CO, Red Hendricks, and had a new CO, Jack Brown, and, due to a retirement, a new Ops Officer, Wayne Harris; so we were a little nervous. We were finally given a departure time of AM 13 Apr. '65 and went home to tell our Ladies that we were going somewhere for sometime."

"Launch was a thing of beauty. The Senior NCO and the Maintenance Officer had all of our birds (21 F-105Ds) lined up and ready to go on the edge of the flightline all in a row. Each of us was greeted by the crew chief and handed forms, all of which had ZERO discrepancies. We all climbed in like the T-Birds and started from a hand salute from the Senior NCO who was starched and standing at rigid attention. Twenty-one birds at once makes one hell of a lot of smoke."

"We took off in flights of 4, with 2 sections of 8 and 1 of 4, headed for our 1st refueling near LA. We carried 4 of the spares all the way to Hickam. We had a terrible time with the first refueling because FAA screwed up everything by delaying the tanker takeoffs. Jack Brown finally got on Guard channel and had everyone head towards Edwards and assigned altitudes for rendezvous with our assigned tankers. I had 1200# when I hooked up and we weren't even feet wet yet. "

"From then everything calmed down and we made it to Hickam -- piece of cake. The pilots had our asses chewed for being motor mouths and then went to the club annex and had a Mai Tai drinking contest. Al Logan (later Maj. General) won with 14 Mai Tai and I finished 2nd with 13. The whole Squadron went to dinner at the Hickam Club and made absolutely wonderful asses of our selves. It looked like the Scene from The Great Santini."

We went to Guam the next day and there were exactly 4 radio transmissions total from take off until landing. The first was "Look at all that water". The next two were exactly the same, and the third was "It's only the top". ... We landed at Guam and were put in the worst barracks I had ever seen. We ended up spending 2 nights there due to really shabby weather between there and Takhli. That was the first time that we were told officially that we were going to Thailand."

"We arrived on 17 Apr. due to the weather and the Dateline. I was met by the same crew chief who launched me. He handed me my banjo and a fairly cool beer. We slept on the floor of the Officers club since they were still building the hooches. We had 2 hooch-type buildings on the flight line and parked our birds on hardstands in pairs. We had 2 officer hooches by the 2nd night and flew our first sorties on the 3rd day we were there. We lost our first aircraft on the 4th day (Sam Woodward) and had our first wake that night."

"The pool was built about 2 months after we arrived. Showers and latrines were built by the end of the third month, of course with no hot water. Each shower had a couple of towers that held water because we had daily power failures and the only water was what was in the towers. The only AC units were in the Comm Shack and one room in the Clinic that was in the old Japanese teak building that still stands

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at the same place."

"There was NO wing staff or Commander above the Squadron COs from the TAC and PACAF Squadrons that were there. The COs divided up the duty by having the TAC Squadron run things on odd days and the PACAF Squadron run things on even days. Worked for 5 months like a charm."

"The 563rd was deployed there for 4 1/2 months and lost 10 aircraft and 6 pilots. That was when it was easy before things got harder. We watched the bad guys build their SAM system and I watched the first missile lift off from southwest of Hanoi on 20 July '65. There were 3 SA-2 missiles on that launch and they killed 1 F-4C and blew hell out of 2 others that landed at Udorn. We were on the first SAM raid on 27 July where we lost 2 birds and both pilots, and Korat lost 4 birds and 3 pilots. Two of the 5 downed pilots were POWs and the other 3 names are on the 2nd panel of the wall about eye level. ... "

During their Takhli deployment, the squadron flew 3,794 combat hours. They lost eight F-105Ds -- two to accidents and six to combat. Four of their pilots were killed and one became a POW. Pilots and support crew returned home to McConnell after they were relieved on 15 August 1965 by the 562 TFS.

"Thud" by Lou Drendel. Pages 9 -12 & 23 TFW History, Jan - Jun 65, USAF microfilm MO554 & Bill Sparks, 563 TFS pilot, e-mail to 355TFWTakhli@egroups.com, 27 Nov 00.

18-Sep-68

4129

The 388 TFW continued preparing for the arrival of F-4E aircrews scheduled for the 469 TFS in October. "On 18 September, the wing notified 13th AF, requesting concurrence and coordination, that a training plan was being developed to allow the incoming F-4 squadron to achieve in-theater operational status in minimum possible time. An integral part of this plan was the rapid updating of selected OR crews to flight lead status. The wing desired three OR crews, selected by the 33 TFW as an advanced 40 TFS party, be allowed to proceed from Korat to Ubon and/or Udorn RTAFBs on 1 October to participate in combat missions with the two F-4 wings, thereby gaining in-theater experience in the F-4 aircraft. Thirteenth AF coordinated with 7th AF to see if the latter's operational sortie requirements permitted this. Both 13th and 7th AFs concurred with the request."

"During this period, the Standardization/Evaluation section was developing checklists and operating procedures to facilitate conversion to F-4 aircraft."

After graduating from the Industrial College of the Armed Forces, in September 1968, Lt Col Billy J. Ellis was assigned to the 388 TFW " ... as chief, Combat Operations, and later became assistant deputy commander for operations. He ... was involved in an organizational aircraft change when the wing converted two squadrons [the 469 TFS and 34 TFS] to the F-4. While serving there he flew 159 combat missions in F-4s and F-105s and accumulated 388 combat flying hours." He departed Korat in August 1969. He last flew the F-105 in September 1969; he had accumulated 1045.1 hours in the airplane. (F-105 Flying Hour Report, dated 18 Nov 1985 provided by USAF Safety Center to Bauke Jan Douma & Jack Phillips, e-mail 18 Mar 11.)

After assignments with SAC, TAC and Hq USAF, Ellis retired as a Maj Gen on 1 Aug 1981.

388 TFW history, July - September 1968, USAF microfilm NO585, frames 0071 - 0072 & Ellis bio at <http://www.af.mil/information/bios/bio.asp?bioID=5343>.

12-Mar-13

7289

"Deacon Billy J. Ellis, age 84, retired major general, USAF, beloved husband of 61 years to Barbara Higginbotham Ellis, passed to his Lord on Tuesday, March 12, 2013. He was born in DeQuincy, LA, a son of the late Nolan Price Ellis and Lillian Isdale Ellis Perkins. Deacon Ellis was a 1951 graduate of the U.S. Military Academy, West Point, NY, and earned his master's degree in business administration from George Washington University and a master's degree in Religious Studies from Notre Dame

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Pontifical Catechetical Institute. Deacon Ellis served over 30 years in the U.S. Air Force and flew one combat tour in Korea and three combat tours in Vietnam. He flew a tour with the Thunderbirds, the USAF acrobatic team, and had flown fighters across both the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. During his third tour in Vietnam, he flew B-52 bombers and KC-135 tankers from Thailand to North Korea. He had over 8,800 flying hours including civilian aircraft.

"After retiring from the Air Force, he voluntarily flew sick patients across the United State for Mercy Medical Airlift. His military decorations include two Distinguished Service Medals, the Legion of Merit with one oak leaf cluster, Distinguished Flying Cross with two oak leaf clusters, Bronze Star Medal, Air Medal with 10 oak leaf clusters, Air Force Commendation Medal, Presidential Unit Citation, and the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award. He had earned the parachutist and missile badges. His favorite airplane to fly was the SR-71 "Blackbird".

"He retired from his distinguished military career as the vice commander of 9th Air Force, Tactical Air Command from Shaw Air Force Base in 1981. Following his military career, he was ordained as a deacon in the Catholic Church Diocese of Charleston in May 1988. He served in the Arlington Diocese and at St. Jude, St. Anne and Shaw Air Force Base in Sumter. He was very active in his ministry: coordinating/leading RCIA, teaching Baptism classes, coordinating/training Altar servers, Hispanic Outreach, Prison ministry, and preaching frequently at daily and Sunday masses. He was awarded the Pro Ecclesia Et Pontifice Medal also known as the Cross of Honor in December 2007, the highest medal awarded to laity by the papacy for distinguished service.

"He was an active outdoorsman: camping, frequent sailing trips even to Bermuda, hiking many sections of the Grand Canyon, competing in several racquet sports and caring for his large yard in Stateburg. He especially loved the "happy chaos" of his large family gatherings where stories told caused tears from laughing so hard. Surviving in addition to his wife are: his children, Elaine Ellis and her husband Mark Krepcho of Phoenix, AZ, Mark Ellis of Eureka, CA, Kevin Ellis of Falls Church, VA, Yvonne Stoops and her husband Richard of Collinsville, CT, Adele Ference and her husband Dennis of Tampa, FL, and Brian Ellis and his wife Tracy of Charlotte, NC; his sister, Betty Breaux of Baton Rouge, LA; his brother, Donald Ellis of San Antonio, TX; his daughter-in-law, Gwyn Ellis of Sumter; his grandchildren, Steven Ellis, Byron Krepcho, Jessica Ellis, Kelly Cloud, Lauren Ellis, Ken Rousseau, Megan Ference, Theresa Ference, Cameron Bauerle, Camille Bauerle, Christopher Ellis and Andrew Ellis; his great-grandson, Skyler Cloud. He was preceded in death by: his sons, Christopher J. Ellis and John P. Ellis; and a daughter-in-law, Ellen Bodie Ellis.

"A Mass of Christian Burial will be held on Sunday, March 17, 2013, at 2:00 p.m. at St. Anne Catholic Church with the Rev. Thomas Burke, C.Ss.R. and Rev. Edward Fitzgerald, J.C.L. officiating. Burial will be held at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, NY, at a later date. Honorary pallbearers will be deacons of the Charleston Diocese, members of the Order of Daedalians, and David Marcella, Bob Nerbun, Jim Rogers, Jim St. Clair, J. Seth, Herman Standifor, Bill Todt, Ted Trapini and Jim Zepko. The family will receive friends on Saturday, March 15, 2013, from 5-8 p.m. with a wake service and rosary at 5:00 p.m. at Bullock Funeral Home.

"Memorials may be made to St. Anne Catholic Church, 216 E. Liberty Street, Sumter, SC 29150, the Wounded Warrior Project, PO Box 758517, Topeka, KS 66675, the Coalition for Pulmonary Fibrosis, 10866 W. Washing Blvd #343, Culver City, CA 90232 or to a charity of one's choice . You may sign the family's guest book at www.bullockfuneralhome.com. The family has chosen Bullock Funeral Home for the arrangements."

Eulogy

Billy Joe Ellis West Point, 1951

Billy Joe Ellis

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Be Thou At Peace

Born December 11, 1928 -- Died March 12, 2013

Billy Joe Ellis was born on 11 December 1928 in DeQuincey, LA. He was appointed to West Point from the 7th Congressional District. He came to the Point after a year at LSU, was on the Lacrosse team for three years and served as a Cadet Captain and E2 Cadet Company Commander his first class year. On graduation, Billy Joe went in the Air Force and basic pilot training at Greenville AFB, and advanced training at Bryan AFB, where he received his pilot wings in June 1952. He then attended fighter gunnery school at Orlando AFB. In December of 1952, Billy Joe was assigned to South Korea with the 8th Fighter-Bomber Squadron and accumulated 253 combat hours in F-84s, and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, 3 Air Medals, and the Commendation Medal. Upon his return to the States in September 1953, he was assigned as flight commander and gunnery instructor with the 3604th Flying Training Squadron at Luke AFB. While at Luke Billy Joe was selected to fly with the Thunderbirds in May 1955 and was an original member of the world's first supersonic aerobatic team when the team received the F-100 aircraft in 1956. Billy Joe then joined the 3597th Combat Crew Training Squadron, Nellis AFB, as a gunnery instructor in February 1957. In August 1957, he was assigned to the US Air Force Academy, CO where he served for three years as commanding air officer. He returned to flying duties in October 1960 as an F-100 pilot and later served as assistant operations officer with the 22nd Tactical Fighter Squadron at Bitburg Air Base, Germany. In 1961, his unit became the first overseas squadron to transition to F-105s. In 1963, Billy Joe attended the Air Command and Staff College at Maxwell AFB and earned a Master's degree from The George Washington University at the same time. In July 1964 Ellis was assigned to Langley AFB, VA as an F-105 flight examiner and assistant chief, Jet Flight Branch, with the 4450th Standardization Evaluation Group, and was awarded the Legion of Merit, 2 Distinguished Flying Crosses, and 4 Air Medals. During this assignment, he went to Takhli Royal Thai AFB, Thailand, with the first F-105 unit from the Tactical Air Command. After 51 combat missions, he returned to Langley in November 1965 and was assigned to Headquarters Tactical Air Command in the Directorate of Operations as F-105 weapon systems project officer. When the command began to enlarge its training capability because of Southeast Asia operations, he was assigned as chief, Combat Crew Training Branch.

In August 1967, he entered the Industrial College of the Armed Forces, at Ft. McNair. Following this Billy Joe joined the 388th Tactical Fighter Wing at Korat Royal Thai AFB, Thailand, in September 1968 as chief, Combat Operations, and later became assistant deputy commander for operations. He again was involved in an organizational aircraft change when the wing converted two squadrons to the F-4. He flew 159 combat missions in F-4s and F-105s and accumulated 388 combat hours, and was awarded the Bronze Star Medal, and 3 additional Air Medals.

In August 1969, Billy Joe became assistant in the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, Personnel, Headquarters, USAF, Washington, D.C. He then assumed command of the 40th Air Division, Strategic Air Command, with Headquarters at Wurtsmith AFB, Michigan in February 1972, this time he was decorated with the Distinguished Service Medal. He re-turned to Thailand in February 1973 as commander of the 17th Air Division at U-Tapao Royal Thai Naval Airfield. The division was engaged in air operations in Southeast Asia, flying B-52 bombers, KC-135 tankers, U-2s, C-130 drones and reconnaissance aircraft. This tour brought his combat time to more than 660 hours.

Billy Joe was then assigned to SAC headquarters at Offutt AFB, in November 1973 as deputy chief of staff, personnel, and in July 1974 became deputy chief of staff, operations. In July 1975 he was appointed director of operations and readiness in the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, Plans and Operations, Headquarters, USAF. He became the deputy inspector general, USAF, in August 1976. He then returned to Langley AFB in August 1977 and assumed his last military assignment as vice commander of the 9th Air Force, Tactical Air Command, with headquarters at Shaw AFB, and he was awarded a second Distinguished Service Medal.

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Billy Joe retired from the USAF in 1981 as a Major General and is the first officer ever to hold positions of operations officer for Tactical Air Command, Strategic Air Command and Headquarters, United States Air Force.

After his military retirement, Billy Joe became Assistant Vice President and later Senior Vice President of KVI. He also earned an MA degree from Notre Dame as a Catecheticallnst. He has served as Permanent Deacon at St. Jude Parish since 1991.

Billy Joe and his wife Barbara made their home in Sumter, South Carolina.

They had eight children: Elaine, Mark, Kevin, Christopher, Yvonne, Adele, John and Brian.

Posted by J. A. "Andy" Chacon on March 17, 2013 at <http://defender.west-point.org/service/display.mhtml?u=18176&i=51272>

*Published in The State on March 14, 2013 and on-line at
<http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/thestate/obituary.aspx?n=billy-j-ellis&pid=163631518&fhid=8932#fbLoggedOut>*