



Gary Parent

GARY WILLIAM PARENT, age 68, died in the early hours of June 7 at his home in Melissa after a lengthy and arduous battle with Pulmonary Fibrosis. At his side was Rita, his wife of 44 years and his daughter Julie. Born in New York but raised in Wisconsin, Gary graduated from Ripon College at the peak of the Viet Nam War and shortly thereafter was admitted to the U.S. Air Force Flight School in Enid, OK. After earning his wings in, he served one tour of duty, flying EC-47s in Pleiku. He volunteered for a second tour and was assigned to an F-100 fighter wing out of Phan Rang where he flew over 100 combat missions. It was during that time that he met and married a Texan, Rita Johnson from the Amarillo area. For the next six years he continued his distinguished service at a training base in Arizona before an assignment as an instructor in the new A-10, which eventually took him along with his family to England where he led a combat ready squadron in Suffolk. On return to stateside, with retirement from the Air Force facing him, Gary spent weekends over two and a half years finishing an MBA. Then as airlines began hiring pilots once again, he was caught up in the whirlwind and retired from the Air Force to fly for American Airlines, assigned to the B727 out of Chicago before being upgraded to First Officer in the MD80. When the strain of commuting from his home in Arizona became too much Gary moved his family to Melissa and for the next fourteen years flew out of DFW. Before retiring at the mandatory age of 60 Gary was upgraded again to the DC-10 flying mainly to Hawaii, a particularly nice route for him because it allowed him to indulge his

passion for golf during layovers. After retirement he continued to golf as an active member of the Hurricane Creek Country Club, as a skilled craftsman in wood, as well as an expert and successful coin collector. In 2007 Gary was diagnosed with IPF (Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis) which is a debilitating, always fatal lung disease which became progressively worse for him. He specifically wished it noted that many of those who flew the F-100, members of the Super Sabre Society, have also contracted this disease; Gary was the 29th in a long line of pilots who have succumbed to IPF. There is a proven correlation with bleed-air leaks on the J57 engine powering the F-100 and a study at Arizona State University indicated that these Viet Nam heroes are up to 30% more susceptible than the general public to the disease. Finally, Gary Parent was a dedicated and active member of the Melissa Christian Church, where he served for years as Trustee, Secretary, President of the Congregation, and where a Memorial Service will be held on Sunday, June 15 at 1pm so that family members from out-of-town, especially his daughter Amy and grandson Felix of Hawaii, are able to attend. It is requested that, in lieu of flowers, gifts in Gary's memory be sent to Melissa Christian Church.