

BIOGRAPHY

CMSGT JAMES BARTON HEATH

5 November 1933 - 18 May 1996

Born on 5 November 1933 in Charlotte, North Carolina, CMSgt James B. Heath graduated high school in 1951 and received an associate degree from Mars Hill Junior College, North Carolina, in June 1953. Three months later he enlisted in the United States Air Force and served his country continuously for the next 33 years, retiring from active service in September 1986. Chief Heath died on 18 May 1996 and is survived by his wife, the former Nancy Colleen Redmond; three sons, Barry, Danny and Eddie; and his father, Leslie Heath, of Reno, Nevada.

Following basic training at Sampson Air Force Base, New York, in 1953, Chief Heath stayed on at the installation as an instructor until transferring to Sheppard Air Force Base, Texas, in 1959. While assigned to Sheppard, detached duty took Chief Heath to Redstone Arsenal, Huntsville, Alabama, after which a remote assignment took him to Peshawar, Pakistan. In 1962 Chief Heath arrived at Goodfellow Air Force Base, Texas, where he was assigned to the NCO Academy. For 22 of the next 24 years he served continuously at the Airman Leadership School and the NCO Academy at Goodfellow, a period of service interrupted only by a nine-month Douglas MacArthur Academy of Freedom fellowship to Howard Payne University in Brownwood, Texas, during which he completed his Bachelor of Arts degree in political science under Operation Bootstrap, and a one-year tour of duty at U-Tapao, Thailand, from 1969 to 1970.

Chief Heath displayed a commanding and dignified presence on Goodfellow and was an inspiration to students and faculty alike. At the Goodfellow NCO Academy, Chief Heath taught all blocks of instruction and became commandant of that institution in 1977, a position he held for the next nine years until his retirement in 1986. Under his direct guidance the Goodfellow NCO Academy became the example of how all academies should look and perform. Indeed, it was mainly through his efforts that the academy became the first professional military education center in the Air Force to receive accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges.

After 33 years of service, Chief Heath retired in September 1986. His numerous awards and decorations include the Meritorious Service Medal with one oak leaf cluster; the Air Force Commendation Medal with two oak leaf clusters; the Small Arms Expert Marksmanship Ribbon; the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal; the Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with palm; the Vietnam Service Medal with four bronze stars; the Air Force Good Conduct Medal with six oak leaf clusters; the Good Conduct medal with three bronze clasps; the National Defense Service Medal with one bronze star; and the Air Force Recognition Ribbon.