

Lanny Ewert

My path and Lanny's did not cross at USAFA. We met in the 776th Tactical Airlift Squadron at Clark AB, PI, in March 1975.

Lanny and I got better acquainted during a deployment to Korea on an early Team Spirit joint exercise in March 1976. We had the envious jobs as ramp "gophers" for the mobile airlift Command Post in Kwang Ju. The usually boring and unfulfilling tasks of dashing to and fro at the whims of the Officer in Charge of the Command Post were greatly alleviated by Lanny's sense of humor and eternal, cheerful attitude. We scurried around the flight line in our Air Force issue winter parkas in our jeep. The main task was checking on various C-130s who were not departing their parking spots quickly enough to suit the OIC.

Another excursion that Lanny, Mary(Lanny's wife), Joann (my wife) and I undertook was to the resort in Baguio, PI. It was a trip that necessitated an unscheduled return-to-base. For reasons I do not recall, we each drove our separate Philippine friendly, compact cars. Maybe the ladies' luggage wouldn't fit into one small trunk of one small car. Whatever the reason, my car decided to malfunction half way to Baguio. The car was an old Toyota Corolla, which had gone through many owners during its life in the PI.

The first clue of trouble was steam hissing from the hood. We pulled over at a service station to inspect. After the necessary delay, we unscrewed the radiator cap. Yep, the coolant had boiled away. For some reason, one of us decided to check the oil, as well. It was probably Lanny that came up with that idea.

The oil was a very light brown, foaming liquid. A Philippine mechanic, one of many we had attracted the attention of, pronounced the diagnosis: a blown head gasket. The oil and the coolant were mixing and leaking, causing the initial over-heating.

With Lanny as my wingman, we started a return trip to Clark. We made several stops to refill the coolant and to check the oil. Again, Lanny's cheerful approach to life made the drive an adventure rather than a tale of disaster.

That old Corolla malfunctioned on another trip Joann and I attempted. Unfortunately for us, Lanny and Mary were not along on that trip. We did not have nearly as much fun limping our way back to Clark.

The news of Lanny's untimely death in 1978 in a C-130 crash in Arkansas was a blow. Joann and I have remembered our trip to Baguio with Lanny and Mary many times over the years. We know, though, that Lanny has "trod the high untrespassed sanctity of space, put out [his] hand and touched the face of God."

Bob Decker