

To the 144th Griffins For Life,

Thank you for taking me under your wing for the annual reunion event. I was cautiously optimistic going in, knowing that I was entering – once again - the land of fighter pilot lingo, call signs that I STILL don't have the full story on (and probably don't want to), and a world that I respect but will never fully understand nor deserve to.

I knew that the weekend would have its moments of reflection, good stories I had never heard, and a healthy dose of irreverence thrown in.

2023 was my first visit to North Island, and Doug and I had so much fun. He would often say that every single time he was with you guys, he'd hear a new story. I was able to reflect on that last time in 2023, while meeting some new GLF pilots, wives and girlfriends this year. Rekindling friendships forged long ago was all very comforting and uplifting to me.

Kudos to everyone involved in the planning and execution of such a wonderful event. All of the great things that happened don't just 'happen.' I thank each one of you who invested time and effort in pulling off the memorable time that I will always hold dear.

As I said Saturday night, your fellow Gig Harbor Griffins, Jad and Paul, were incredibly supportive to us throughout Doug's sickness, and to me, especially now. They are an outstanding reflection on

the unit. If this sounds like an OER, I suppose that it is. For you retirees, your mission has changed, but it's about how you fly your life, instead of the airplane. And Paul Carroll was a beacon of hope and support from afar, as were many of you with your stories and recollections, which I read - each and every one - to Doug.

Doug was so happy to share that part of his life with so many of you. He would often dream that he was scheduled to fly, but was trying to convince someone – anyone – that he wasn't current!! He always awoke in time before he stepped. He often reflected on how unbelievably lucky he was to fly. Many years after retirement when a fighter would pass overhead, he sometimes questioned, "Did I really get to do that?!?"

That was a beautiful, heartfelt card that you gave me. The stories you told and the hugs you enveloped me with meant the world to me. It was exactly the best way to celebrate Doug. I thought that it was perfect.

GLFW (Wife),
Jean

P.S. J.T.'s efforts in creating such a captivating video were, as always, entertaining, fun, and an important part of capturing the living history of the unit. And the dedication to "Cuda" would make him feel both embarrassed and honored.

I plan to use a portion of this video at the Celebration Event for Doug on April 22, 2024.

Please know that you are all invited to the Military Honors Ceremony at Mt. Tahoma National Cemetery at 10:30 a.m., with the Celebration starting at 2 p.m. at Canterwood Golf & Country Club here in Gig Harbor. I believe that Jad sent you all of the details. Flight suits, flight jackets (green or leather) are encouraged, but not at all required. But please, do wear some clothes. (Do I know my audience, or what?!!)