

A Salute to Hal Shook Fighter Pilot WWII, Korea and Vietnam

*Presented by
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Cary, North Carolina
August 14, 2007*



Harold G. Shook was born on April 25, 1920, in Portland, Oregon. His mother passed away when Hal was three years old, he was then raised by his grandmother. Hal's grandmother moved to San Francisco, California, with Hal and his sister when Hal was eight years old to join their father.

At age thirteen or fourteen Hal's hot button was tripped and he recognized that the Army Air Corps was the way for him to go. From that point on, his task was to qualify with two years of college (he wanted no more than needed); those two years were spent at San Francisco Junior College. He joined the service and entered flying school about the time of his twenty-first birthday - April 25, 1941 - becoming a part of class 41-I. Primary training took place at Oxnard, California. He trained in a Stearman PT-13B, Radial 680 engine, open cockpit, two-seater biplane; these were the early development days of becoming a fighter pilot. Next was combat training in many different fighter planes and dive-bombers. He became a flight commander and operations officer, then on to squadron commander.

Combat duty included D-Day, D+1, D+2, and beyond, then came Normandy and St Martin de Blagny, the battle of St. Lo, the Falaise Pocket, and more! Hal flew 105 combat missions; 240 combat hours successfully completed, reaching to rank of Colonel.

Hal Shook was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal with 19 Oak Leaf Clusters, a Presidential Unit Citation, the Belgian Croix de Guerre, the French Croix de Guerre with Palm, and the Belgian Fourragere. Also the Legion of Merit and Commendation Ribbon with Cluster.

Hal Shook was, in the opinion of the men who flew with him and other officers and men in the squadron, the finest Commanding Officer they had ever been associated with. Without a doubt the finest fighter pilot, best navigator and all-around leader, he was tops as a C.O. In "Shooky" the pilots had an ideal leader they would follow anywhere. All officers and enlisted men exerted special effort because Shook wished it done and not because he ordered it done.

He hated to stay on the ground while his boys were flying for fear they would run into a fight without him. When part of his squadron was bombing and part of his squadron flew top cover, Hal Shook always handled the riskier dive-bombing assignments until his last mission when for the last time he flew the top cover flight. He flew on many of the 506th's missions, if not as squadron commander, then as wingman to break in some of his other pilots as mission leaders. Finally the Group Commander had to tell him to take it easy, so he flew only every other mission.

The above information is a short synopsis of the story of Hal Shook and his life as a youth and combat pilot.



Hal graduated from the University of California, Berkeley, and holds graduate degrees from George Washington University and the National War College. He later commanded Air Force units in Korea and Vietnam to include an air division, 5,000 members. In addition to staff assignments in HQ, USAF and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, he also served as Commander of four major training schools, three started from scratch.

You can learn more about Hal, and lessons learned, from his book, "Flying Spirit." He also authored a second book, titled "Fighter Pilot Jazz" from which I got most of the above information. I highly recommend that all of us should read "Fighter Pilot Jazz."

Hal's wife is Marilyn Shook. Originally schooled at Mills College in Oakland, California, Marilyn holds a B.A. from the American University and accredited study at La Sorbonne, Paris; the University of Texas at Austin; and the University of Maryland, Overseas Division (France). She also wrote a book, titled "Working Happy."

Together, Hal and Marilyn co-founded Life Management Services (LMS) in 1976. LMS provides consulting services, keynote addresses, workshops, counseling, and "train the trainer" programs in the areas of team building, strategic and tactical planning, leadership, life management, and career planning.

Hal Shook, the American Legion Post 67, Cary, North Carolina, salutes you for your service to God and country!