

Victor J. (Vic) Sullivan

Vic Sullivan was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania at Hahnemann University Hospital in 1926.

As he was finishing high school, Vic met a beautiful young lady named Lillian Loeper--they were a perfect match. But the rumblings of war had already begun, and Vic knew he would be joining the fight. He enlisted in the U.S. Navy, and asked Lillian to marry him. She said “yes”, but there was a problem. Although he was in the Navy, he was not yet 18 years old. Marriage would require approval. Approval was granted, and on April 7, 1944, Vic married Lillian, a journey of 68 years together, until her passing in 2012.

Vic spent his years of naval service in the Pacific arena with assignments to landing craft such as the LCT 1, the LST 716 and river boats. He drove a “taxi boat”, transporting servicemen to and from the ships for shore liberty. As with many young and innovative crews, he and his mates quickly devised a way to transport beer in the “taxi boat”. An invasion of Japan was planned, and so Vic and his crew took part in the necessary drills in preparation for an event that, fortunately, would never occur. For one assignment they took an LCT, armed with two 20MM’s and a crew of ten from Hawaii to the Philippines. It was a long slow trip that never seemed to end. As for action, Vic was present, when the U.S.S. Pittsburg lost its bow in Okinawa on June 4, 1945 and, he was in Japan on September 1, 1945, the day before V-J Day, when Japan officially surrendered.

When Vic returned Stateside in 1946, he took a job with Allison, took flying lessons, obtained his pilot’s license and joined the Air National Guard. At Allison he was assigned to the U.S. Air Force as a technical representative for Allison Jet Engines. Vic learned everything he could about jet engines and flying, and even today, he can explain how jet engines work, and the physics behind them.

In 1950 with the Korean conflict going on, Vic trained in a variety of aircraft, and while he was never in Korea during the conflict, he was a very important part of the military effort. Because of those assignments, he was away from home, and his beloved Lillian, for long periods of time. How they managed to make their marriage work, still baffles him. His best answer was that “We were so excited to be spending time together, we didn’t have time to argue.”

Vic flew approximately 150 missions, mostly in the F89 and the T33. The F89 was Vic’s favorite plane, and was used to test fire dummy nuclear missiles. The

missiles would take off from the plane, and the burners would take all the oxygen out of the causing the jet to stall. The goal was to get the jet engine started again and escape the imaginary nuclear explosion that would follow, if it were a live missile.

When the U.S. entered the Vietnam War, Vic was a well-trained pilot, but when you talk to him about this chapter in his life, his posture changes, his voice lowers and it's clear that he doesn't care for this particular train of conversation. Nevertheless, in Vietnam Vic was assigned to fly helicopters. It was dangerous work, not only was there hostile fire, but the helicopters were also prone to break. He was still a problem solver for Allison, and it was his job to find the reasons for failure.

Vic had an office in the Pentagon during the cold war era, and provided support or every branch of the military as a lecturer, plane crash reconstructionist, pilot trainer and a problem solver—anything related to planes. If the jet was acting up and the pilot couldn't figure out the problem, he would take it to the sky and to get a first-hand look at what was wrong. He loved his work, and he was good at it.

At various times he was stationed in Norway, Finland, New Zealand, Iceland, Philippines, Japan and Washington D.C. He retired from the National Guard in 1983 with the rank of Colonel.

Vic and Lillian were actively involved in organizations that encourage mankind to be better. Vic has been a Shriner for 40 years, and a Freemason for 71 years. His mission is to improve and strengthen the character of those around him.

Vic and Lillian spent their post-military years on a farm near Pittsboro, and when Lillian died in 2012, he struggled on alone. As a problem solver and a man of action, Vic realized that he was not really a farmer. He had no children and no other family, so he moved to the Masonic Home in Franklin, Indiana, where he has people around him who are interesting and care for him. Nearly every evening he talks with Jeff, a friend from Hendricks County, who is making sure that Vic is not alone.