

MISSOURI STATE SOCIETY DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

Proudly Honors



LYLE REAL
UNITED STATES ARMY
CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER (CWO4)
1968 – 1990



WOUNDED IN ACTION – APRIL 13, 1970

as

PURPLE HEART PATRIOT

AUGUST 2025

Honoring His Service and Sacrifice

Sponsored by: Mary Hempstead Lisa Chapter, NSDAR



Lyle Real, Chief Warrant Officer Four, Retired, was born in Kearney, Nebraska. He served twenty-two years in the United States Army as a helicopter and jet pilot. He was the first Army pilot to fly a jet. Additionally, Lyle was a career pilot for thirty years; thus, he has over fifty-two years of flight time in both helicopters and airplanes.

In 1968, at age nineteen, Lyle was working in a farm equipment manufacturing plant from 5:30 p.m. until 5 a.m. His older brother, who had recently served in the United States Army, encouraged Lyle to join the Army and to pursue becoming a helicopter pilot. Lyle had a knack for numbers and for reading charts, both talents which later helped him to become a successful pilot. In March 1968, Lyle went to the Army Recruiter's Office as a volunteer. Not yet married to his wife, Susan, whom he married on April 16, 1971, Lyle left his mother and father behind to begin his military journey.

At the recruiting office, Lyle expressed his desire to become a helicopter pilot. He was tested immediately for candidacy. He then traveled to Omaha, Nebraska, for additional tests and a physical. Next, he was interviewed by a board of officers. Having done well, he received a postcard shortly congratulating him. Thinking he would have the summer to relax before entering service, instead, Lyle was given only seven days' advanced notice. His induction occurred in Omaha, Nebraska, on April 17, 1968. He began his basic training at Fort Polk, Louisiana, which lasted ten weeks. Upon graduating, he was sent to Fort Wolters, Texas. He began primary helicopter training from July to November 1968. From November 1968 to 1969, Lyle attended advanced helicopter training, part two. Lyle recalls that the class size was 277 individuals, and ultimately fewer than 150 graduated. The Bell H-13 was the first helicopter that Lyle flew for his training.

In March 1969, he graduated as a Warrant Officer, Basic Army Aviator. In April 1969, he arrived in Vietnam, a pilot of the 61st Assault Helicopter Company. Flying Bell UH-1 helicopters, Lyle's missions involved: troop assault, lifting, supply deliveries, medevac, and whatever assignment was asked. He remembers flying daily from 7 a.m. until 5 p.m., with some days exceeding 10-12 hours of flying.

One day, while serving as an instructor pilot, Lyle led a flight team of six for a company assault mission. On the last flight of the day, he took trail position, as the number three helicopter was destroyed by an RPG (rocket-propelled grenade). On the second day, he gave three check rides. On day three, April 13, 1970, Lyle took a young, new pilot on a resupply mission, which was ordinarily a routine, safer mission for flight training. While the helicopter was fifty feet above the ground, landing at less than 20 mph, two enemy soldiers ambushed the helicopter from the ground, shooting thirty holes into the left side of the helicopter. Lyle, in the pilot's seat, was injured in his right thigh and left foot. Fortunately, the remaining crew (crew chief, door gunner, resupply sergeant) was not injured. However, panicked, the young pilot in training immediately banked the helicopter radically to the right, which could have resulted in over-torque of the engine. Although badly injured, Lyle took control of the helicopter and returned the crew safely to the medevac area. The helicopter was losing fuel at a significant rate, resulting in a total loss. Lyle, with help from the crew, hobbled into the medevac unit for treatment. Lyle recalls that he and the crew were totally taken unaware by the ambush, as an infantry battalion had established a perimeter around their area of flight.

Lyle was sent to Quy Nhon to have the bullet removed from his right thigh. It was determined by the doctors that the bullet in his left foot would not be removed. The bullet and fragments remain in his foot today. He says it does not cause him any discomfort. After leaving Quy Nhon, he was routed to Colorado to Fitzsimons Army Medical Center for five days. Next, he was sent home for thirty days, where his mother additionally nursed him back to good health. His total travel time for treatment was twenty days – from Quy Nhon, Cam Ranh Bay, Camp Zama, Colorado, to home. He was next assessed for active duty and assigned to Fort Riley, Kansas.



Lyle recalls his Company Commander came to Quy Nhon and awarded Lyle a Purple Heart Medal, which was kept to be presented by his company. During a later date, during a Brigade Ceremony, Lyle was awarded his Purple Heart Medal during the month of July 1970.

Lyle remembers the most difficult part of his service was the constant moving from place to place. Although he did stay in touch with family, he said that the only phone calls were by Ham operator and letters during the early years. He wrote letters to his mother once a week. He states that his experience provided him with discipline and good organizational skills.

He made good friends while in the service and attends a unit reunion every year. He once enjoyed a 2,000-mile motorcycle trip around Lake Michigan with one of his friends with whom he served during the Vietnam War. His best man at his wedding was his buddy, whom he met in Omaha when he left for basic training.

At the end of his Army career, Lyle was the first Army helicopter pilot to fly a jet, a Gulfstream 3. His assignment was to fly generals for their travel needs. He retired in Fort Belvoir, Virginia. He and Susan have two grown children, Richard and Rachael. His wife, Susan, also assisted him during his career as a corporate pilot; she worked as a flight attendant for several years on chartered Gulfstream flights.

Utilizing the GI Bill, engaged in dedicated service to his country, furthering his studies, and through perseverance and hard work, Lyle has led an incredible life. He has flown the following helicopters: OH-13, UH-1, OH-58, CH-54. He has flown the following fixed-wing aircraft: T-41, T-42, U-21, C-12, and C-20 (Gulfstream 3 Jet), the Army's first jet unit. His personal decorations include the Purple Heart Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, Air Medal with V device, and Army Commendation Medal with V device. His Campaign and Service Medals include the National Defense Service Medal, Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal. He was awarded the Vietnam Service Medal, Armed Forces Reserve Medal, and the following Training and Service Ribbons: Army Service Ribbon and Overseas Service Ribbon.

His advice to the next generation is to find your passion and follow it. He stated that he believes he did his best to be a good soldier and pilot for his country.