

## For Members of the 12 TFW Association

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### RICK KELLER, GLEN LEE, AND THE PHANTOM

By David Kerzie ©

**Introduction:** On 27 May 1970, **Captain George R. Keller** and **First Lieutenant Glen Hung Nin Lee** were crew members aboard an 480 TFS F-4D 66-0275 in a flight of two aircraft. The Phantom was struck by AAA and crashed in the vicinity of grid coordinates YV479073, fifteen kilometers southeast of Chbar, Mondolkiri Province, Cambodia, or 41 miles west of Ban Me Thuot (approximately 10 miles inside Cambodia). On the sixth pass, they received enemy ground fire and the starboard wing burst into flames, then separated from the fuselage, causing the aircraft to roll and dive to the ground (Hobson, p.205). Wreckage was scattered over an area of 100 square yards. No parachutes were observed and no electronic beacon signals heard. On 28 May 1970, a group rescue team located the crash site and recovered Captain Keller. The remains of Lt. Lee were repatriated in 1993. (MIA/KIA Report, Library of Congress)

In early 1970 I had the distinct honor and privilege in serving with Air Force Captain Rick Keller and Air Force 1/Lt Glen Lee, two members of the 480<sup>th</sup> Tactical Fighter Squadron. A limited biography of these combat proven warriors and gentlemen is documented below.

**Rick Keller**, a 1965 USAF Academy graduate, was assigned as a F4 Aircraft Commander to the 480th TFS, 12thTW, Phu Cat Air Base, Vietnam in late 1969 and early 1970. This was Rick's second consecutive year long F-4 tour in Southeast Asia having completed a previous assignment flying combat missions out of Ubon Air Base, Thailand. Rick, an outstanding officer and person in every respect, had a work ethic that wouldn't quit. He devoted a tremendous amount of time working as the wing weapons officer in addition to his normal flying as a front seat pilot and instructor pilot. He was cautioned more than once about over doing his efforts and not taking his proper crew rest. Younger than most of the front seat pilots, Rick was recognized early for his skills in flying the F-4, his knowledge of the weapons that the Phantom carried, and combat operations in general.

**Glen Lee**, a native of Hawaii, was assigned to the 480<sup>th</sup> TFS, Phu Cat Air Base, Vietnam as a Weapons System Officer (back seat pilot ... guy in the back ... GIB). After completing Undergraduate Pilot Training, Glen graduated from combat crew training in the F-4 and subsequently received orders for combat in Vietnam. Glen had a special gift; that of helping others in less fortunate circumstances. For security reasons, personnel were restricted from leaving the base at Phu Cat. Still, Glenn found ways to help the local Vietnamese utilizing various self help projects and charitable actions through the base chapel. He was a fun guy and extremely popular within the ranks of the squadron.

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I knew Rick and Glen for only about five months. Yet, when one is serving in a combat environment, friendships can become strong and the emotions great. During this short period of time, I developed a fond affection and great deal of respect for both Rick and Glen.

Teamwork and crew integrity are very important for combat operations and in order to enhance this, the squadron made every reasonable attempt to schedule missions with aircrews that had worked together previously. Rick and Glen seemed to click and they flew together often in the two place Phantom. They perished together when their aircraft was hit by enemy ground fire. Rick was 26. He left behind his bride of only a few days, his parents, four sisters and three brothers. Glen was 24. He was survived by his wife and two small children.

The biographies below were transcribed and briefly edited from the chapel obituary page furnished at their memorial service. The service was conducted at Phu Cat Air Base, RVN on 6 June 1970.

### IN MEMORY OF CAPTAIN GEORGE RICHARD KELLER

**George Rick Keller was born in Los Angeles, California on 5 September 1943. He attended many schools in his youth because of moves associated with his father's Air Force career. Rick graduated in May 61 from the Sewanee Military Academy, Sewanee Tennessee, and was immediately accepted into the United States Air Force Academy. He graduated from the Air Force Academy and received his commission in the Air Force on 9 June 1965. He received a Bachelor of Science Degree. Rick Keller entered pilot training with the class of 67-B at Craig AFB, Alabama. He received his pilot wings as an outstanding officer graduate on 10 Sep 1966. After completing Basic Survival school and F-4D training, he was assigned to the 336 TFS at Seymour Johnston AFB, NC, 2 Mar 67. On July 1968, he upgraded to Aircraft Commander at MacDill AFB, FL. In Sept 1968, he was assigned to Ubon Air Base, Thailand where he flew 226 combat missions. Captain Keller then volunteered for a second SEA tour and was assigned to Phu Cat Air Base, South Vietnam where he flew 166 combat missions. Captain Keller has been awarded the Air Medal with 11 Oak Leaf**

**Clusters and the Distinguished Flying Cross. On 11 May 1970 Rick was married to Mary E. Miller in Hawaii on his R&R. Captain Keller was reported killed in action on 27 May 70 when his F-4D crashed as a result of enemy ground fire while supporting our ground forces in Cambodia. He was on his 392<sup>nd</sup> fighter combat mission.**

**IN MEMORY OF**

**1/LT GLEN H. N. LEE**

**1/Lt Glen Lee was born 6 Aug 1945 in Honolulu, Hawaii. He attended elementary school in Honolulu and graduated from Kalani H.S. in June 1963. He attended Mannaolu College on the island of Maui and then entered the University of Iowa at Iowa City, Iowa. There he became quite popular and was also an active member of student affairs and government. He graduated from the Univ. of Iowa with a B. S. in General Science. He entered OTS at Lackland AFB, Texas and was commissioned a 2/Lt in the USAF Reserves on 17 Nov 1967. Shortly thereafter, he began undergraduate pilot training with the 3550<sup>th</sup> Student Training Squadron, Moody AFB, Georgia. After completing a 53 week course, he received his pilot wings and graduated 24 Jan 1969. Subsequently, Lt. Lee was assigned to the 4593 Student Squadron at Davis-Monthan AFB, Arizona. On 17 May 1969, while at Davis-Monthan, he was promoted to 1/Lt. He completed his combat crew training in the McDonnell F-4C Phantom II. After graduating from Davis-Monthan, he arrived in Vietnam on 13 Nov 1969 where he served with the 480 Tactical Fighter Squadron located at Phu Cat Air Base. 1/Lt Lee was awarded the Air Medal, the Vietnamese Campaign Medal and Vietnamese Service Medal. Lt. Lee died while in the service of his country on 27 May 1970.**