David Franklin Mengis

December 4, 1952 ~ October 14, 2023

David Franklin Mengis, “Dave” was born in Woodland California to Harry and Wanda Mengis on December 4, 1952. He left his body on October 14, 2023, in SLC, UT under Mount Olympus in his last home, The Abbington. David departed in the arms of his most precious wife and dearest friend, Robin, his son Nicholas, as well as his other caregivers Emily and Felicity. Dave is survived by his wife, son, cherished younger sister Debi, brother-in-law Phil, and his Citadel Class of '74 “A company” brothers, particularly those closest in David’s last days Randy, Jack, and Bill.

He also leaves behind several great friends and brothers from his years with American Airlines (AA) namely Joel, Bud, and John, and his newest friends/family from the Abbington, including Roger. He was always grateful to all for their love and friendship.

Dave grew up in Woodland, CA, and graduated from Woodland High School in 1970 at age 17 years. As a boy, he loved shooting out at "the plant,” visiting Bodega Bay, and spending weekends water skiing and fishing on the Sacramento River. As a teen working in the Nugget grocery store, Dave befriended other life-long pals Tom and Phil Duzan (now deceased) who introduced him to flying and ultimately defined his career life.

Dave was a Citadel class of 1974 graduate and cherished his time in Charleston, SC, and his place in the “Long Gray Line.” He wore his class ring without fail his entire life and wore a Citadel Polo shirt daily in his last months--his last “uniform” was a Class of 74' red polo. He cherished his time spent with his Citadel brothers/pals at Homecoming weekends and got there more frequently during his son's Citadel tenure (2007 graduate).

After graduating from The Citadel, David moved back to Woodland for about 6 months while awaiting his active duty commission in the United States Air Force (USAF) in January 1975.

He started pilot training in T38s at Williams Air Force Base (AFB) in Arizona before going on to Homestead AFB, Florida where he started flying the F4 Phantom. He then was stationed at Kadina Air Base in Okinawa. It was there he got into scuba diving/spearfishing with another lifelong friend Kevin and he earned a black belt in Okinawan martial arts.

The time spent in Okinawa was a highlight of his military service. David’s other assignments took him to Vance AFB in Oklahoma, and Randolf AFB in San Antonio, Texas where he finished his active duty USAF as a T-38 flight instructor.

Being a soldier and fighter pilot was in large part how David defined himself.

In David's own words (from personal notes found upon his passing):

"The World has long wrestled with a definition for a twentieth-century phenomenon - the fighter pilot. Actually, it is quite simple. He is a soldier who flies. Period.

It matters not which aircraft he flies, the seat he occupies, or whether he is actively flying today. Truly, many great fighter pilots are presently retired or commanding a staff.
To be a soldier, he must place the welfare of a nation above his own. To be a flyer, he must find the courage to leave the ground in a machine that may or may not bring him back...
Once a fighter pilot, always a fighter pilot."

Following active duty service, David went back to Woodland/Sacramento, CA in 1981 to spend time with family/friends and plan out his next steps which ultimately led to him flying for AA in August 1985. He started as a flight engineer on the Boeing 727 based in New York before transitioning to flight officer on the McDonald Douglas (MD) 11 based in Dallas-Ft Worth TX.
In 1986 he again had the opportunity to get back into flying the Phantom F4 and briefly the F16 in the USAF Reserves 704th Outlaws at Bergstrom AFB in Austin, TX. It is here David met the love of his life Robin in 1990 and their son Nicholas, and together they started the next half of David's life.

On March 14, 1992, David and Robin were married in his hometown Woodland, he adopted Nicholas, separated from the USAF Reserves, and they moved to Woodland in June 1992 where they lived for 2 years before moving to Salt Lake City, UT where they fell in love with the Wasatch mountains. They built their "palace on the hill" of Scenic Oaks Cove in 1994 under Lone Peak near their favorite Little Cottonwood Canyon, where world-class ski resorts Snowbird and Alta are located. David was a commuter pilot between SLC and various bases (DFW, Chicago, Miami, and LA) for the remainder of his career with AA predominantly spent flying internationally, often to Narita, Japan one of his favorite trips. He retired as a Boeing 777 captain in December 2017 having a perfect safety record after thousands of flying hours.

David was always a Fighter Pilot at heart, a gentleman, a Citadel man, a man's man, a great friend, an adoring Husband, a loving supportive, and fully accepting Dad, and the Best Brother any person could ever hope to have. He was modest, courteous, humble, loving, and driven by an indomitable and inextinguishable spirit. He also was a complex yet simple man who enjoyed the simple pleasures in life, and he most enjoyed caring for all those most dear to his Heart. There will be few, if any days we are fortunate to have had David in our lives will not miss him, his Love, his positive outlook, his laugh, his unique and hilarious sense of humor, and his smile that brightened any room.
As one of his Abbington caregivers said "he was the sunshine brightening the room."

We are so honored and better in our own lives to have had David, Dave, Bones, Bug, Bugsy, Diggum, and Dad share himself while here and he will carry on in our hearts and memories for the rest of our time here and eternally.

"Those we Love don't go away, they walk beside us every day, unseen, unheard, but always near, still loved, still missed, and infinitely dear." We Love You and always will miss you!

David did not wish for a funeral and wished to be cremated with some of his ashes spread in meaningful places where he spent time while here. He would want a good party with good food, drink, conversation with laughter to celebrate his time spent on this earth. There will be a celebration of his life with his Texas family and one with his Citadel family during the 2024 Homecoming weekend that also will be the Class of '74's 50-year reunion.