



Michael Bohonak Jr.

May 19, 2019

Michael Bohonak, Jr., 77, of Lancaster, SC passed away Sunday, May 19, 2019 at Carolina Continue Care-Pineville, NC. He was born July 8, 1941 in Pittsburgh, PA, a son of the late Michael Bohonak, Sr. and Anna Murin Bohonak.

A talented athlete, Mike left Pittsburgh in 1959 to attend Clemson University on a football scholarship. After an injury during his second year of play, he was asked by basketball coach, Press Maravich, to continue with a basketball scholarship. He became a starter on the Clemson basketball team and a member of the team who faced Wake Forest in the finals of the 1962 ACC Tournament in Raleigh, NC. Even though they lost, he won the heart of the daughter of one of the NC State football coaches, the start of an adventure that lasted for 57 years.

Prior to attending college, Mike had also been a talented baseball player. He continued playing baseball at Clemson and was recognized as one of the few athletes who lettered in football, basketball, and baseball. It was only as a young army officer that he picked up the game of golf, or he might have added a fourth sport to his record.

Mike graduated from Clemson in 1964 and was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the US Army. On June 27th, he married Noni McCullough Bohonak and soon started a life of service as an Infantry Officer at Ft. Benning, GA. After completing airborne school in 1965, he became a member of the newly formed 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) nicknamed the Air Cav or Air Cavalry. A new concept in warfare was to bring in troops rapidly by helicopter rather than jumping from airplanes. In November, the newly formed Airmobile division began a campaign against a heavily trained and well equipped unit referred to as the North Vietnamese Army (NVA), later to be known as the battle of Ia Drang Valley. While he lost many of his friends in the heavy fighting between November 14 – 16, he was fortunate to have been selected to serve in the headquarters company whose leaders were directing operations. Mike's replacement was killed only a few weeks after Mike returned to the United States.

After a second tour in Vietnam and a successful career including his time with the 82nd

Airborne at Fort Bragg, NC, he had an opportunity to retire and enter his second stage of life as a civilian. Among his decoration and awards: Parachute Badge, National Defense Service medal, Army Commendation Medal (2nd Oak Leaf Cluster), Overseas Bars(4), Vietnam Service Medal, Bronze Star Medal (2nd Oak Leaf Cluster, Army Service Ribbon, Vietnam Campaign Medal W/60 Device, Combat Infantry Badge, Meritorious Service Medal (1st Oak Leaf Cluster), Overseas Service Ribbon(1), Senior Parachute Badge, and the Vietnam Cross of Gallantry w/Palm.

In 1985, he had an opportunity to retire and join his wife at the University of South Carolina at Lancaster (USCL) as the basketball coach and instructor of basketball and baseball as well as special course to support freshman. After one successful year, USCL chose to discontinue basketball. He later became the golf coach of a newly formed golf team. He continued teaching golf and basketball, finishing his last basketball class only a week before entering the hospital. This put him close to his beloved Clemson where he renewed many of his friendships with Clemson players and classmates as well as finding new Clemson friends. He even renewed and formed friendships at the annual reunion of University of South Carolina and Clemson basketball players.

Entering the hospital for treatment of an infected toe, he was diagnosed with MERSA and other health problems. On March 12th, he entered the Atrium Hospital in Pineville and after several weeks of battle against MERSA, he no longer tested positive for MERSA and moved to the next phase of his recovery. No longer confined to bed in a small room, he had a large fourth floor room with a view from his bed that ranged from Carowinds to downtown Charlotte. He was regaining full use of his arms and legs and sitting up while facing a newly found Shingles infection which he fought against as he was preparing to move to a facility to concentrate of his physical recovery for a return to his home in Lancaster.

On May 17th, he enjoyed a visit with his brother, Bill, and sister-in-law, Patty. His youngest brother, Don, had predeceased him almost 3 years earlier. An avid hunter, Mike loved the outdoors and hunting with his many friends and family in Pennsylvania. His talks with Bill by phone about preparing for hunting this year had helped him through the difficult times in the hospital. His visit with Bill and Patty meant so much to him. The next day, he kept saying he was going home soon and not staying in the hospital. He watched NC State beat UNC in a baseball game on TV with Noni, dozing occasionally. Once he awoke to show his concern that a gate had been left open and his dog was going to go out through the gate that had been left open. He loved the 82nd Airborne chorus who often performed at NC State and the songs about "standing in the door" which he apparently was doing on Saturday. On Sunday morning, May 19, he was standing in the door and ready to follow his beloved dog Hootchie through the gate.

He loved his many pets but especially his late dog, Hootchie. He once said that he would hunt down and kill anyone who killed his dogs. When asked what he would do if someone killed his wife, he said he would call the police and let them handle it. A believer in the Rainbow Bridge, he crossed into Heaven with his many cats and dogs who were waiting for him at the Bridge, with Hootchie taking his place at his side.

He leaves behind his wife, Noni, and his dogs (Ziva, Starr, and Rubye) who will miss him and join him when God is ready for them. He leaves behind a large family and more friends than he knew. A special thanks to Lisa Enfinger, who became a sister and friend to Mike and Noni. Her help and friendship in life and death will continue with me.

Among his living relatives are Bill Bohonak and his wife Patty of Pittsburgh, PA. Also, his sister-in-law Cheryl Bohonak and Uncle John Bohonak of Pittsburgh, PA. He had special memories of his visits at Myrtle Beach with his Aunt Tootsie and Uncle Bob Johnson of Indiana. He was extremely proud of his nephews and nieces and cousins who have been a part of the life he loved. He had such good times with his hunting family and friends in Pennsylvania and always looked forward to talks with them and hunting. A special thanks to his nephew, Mike and his wife, who drove for 3 hours to West Virginia to help Mike finish the drive to Pennsylvania for his last hunting trip.

The family will receive friends from 2 p.m. until 3 p.m. Wednesday, May 29, 2019 at Lancaster Funeral Home. A memorial service will be conducted by Patricia McCullough Parker and Roy Parker. Burial will be later this year at Arlington Cemetery.

Memorial contributions may be made to Lancaster SPCA, P. O. Box 3042, Lancaster, SC 29721 in honor of Hootchie or to Clemson University Basketball for a memorial to be set up at a later date.

Notes to the family may be made at <http://www.lancasterfunderalhome.com>.

Lancaster Funeral Home & Cremation Service is serving the family of Mr. Bohonak.

If Mike could speak right now, he would say "Go Tigers!" and want everyone to wear orange for him.

Cemetery

Arlington National Cemetery

Arlington, VA,

Events

MAY 29 Visitation 02:00PM - 03:00PM

Lancaster Funeral Home & Cremation Service
709 North White Street Post Office Box 339, Lancaster,
SC, US, 29720

MAY 29 Celebration of Life 03:00PM

Lancaster Funeral Home Chapel
709 North White Street, Lancaster, SC, US, 29720

Comments



“ A tribute video has been added.



Lancaster Funeral Home - May 28, 2019 at 11:01 AM



“ The Clemson Corps of Cadets has now added another member of its long line of Military heroes as God's newest angel. I can vividly see Mike lacing up his spit shined jump boots, T10 parachute and reserve properly fitted, and is now standing in the door of life for his last jump as his life's work on earth is now complete. Mike was a senior at Clemson during my freshman year, we both served in Vietnam and in our beloved 82d Airborne Division. While Mike was from Pittsburgh and lived out his final years in SC, I was from SC and currently live in the Pittsburgh area. Both of us honored the call of duty to serve a cause larger than self. May God bless the life and legacy of this distinguished Clemson Tiger and Military hero, and may God's loving hand guide this family as they fondly remember what Mike meant to so many people. And now in honor of Mike's Airborne service: "We All American and proud to be, for we're the sons of liberty; some ride the gliders to the enemy, others are sky paratroopers; We All American and fight we will, till all the guns of the foe are still; Airborne from skies of blue, we're coming through Let's Go!" Earl Hansford Grubbs, Retired Army Officer and CU Class of 1967

Earl Grubbs - May 29, 2019 at 08:07 AM



“ 15 files added to the album LifeTributes



Lancaster Funeral Home - May 28, 2019 at 09:46 AM



“ Aunt Tootsie and Uncle Bob purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Michael Bohonak Jr..



Aunt Tootsie and Uncle Bob - May 27, 2019 at 12:21 PM



“ Noni, John and I were sad to hear of Mike's death. You are in our prayers
Go TIGERS!!!!!!

Debbie - May 26, 2019 at 09:13 AM



“ Dr. Bohonak, sorry for you loss. I am praying for you.

Ethan Catherman

Ethan Catherman - May 25, 2019 at 10:45 PM



“ Noni, Mike was one of a kind. I know the students loved him, they would transfer out of my U-101 class to take his! Love, prayers, and hugs to you my friend.

Lynn Baker - May 25, 2019 at 02:34 PM



“ Noni, You have our most heartfelt sympathy and are in our thoughts and prayers. I have a lot of wonderful memories He truly will be missed!
With Deepest Sympathy,
Pam and Ray Smithyman

Pam Smithyman - May 23, 2019 at 02:56 PM



“ USC Lancaster Athletics lit a candle in memory of Michael Bohonak Jr.



USC Lancaster Athletics - May 23, 2019 at 08:42 AM



“ Noni, Mike would come into our office with a big smile on his face and could make me smile even in the most stressful times. His positive attitude was contagious. I'm so sorry and will continue to hold you in my heart in hopes that the wonderful memories you have will carry you through in the coming days. Love and hugs! Karen

Karen Faile - May 22, 2019 at 02:29 PM



“ Becky Lowery lit a candle in memory of Michael Bohonak Jr.



Becky Lowery - May 22, 2019 at 09:23 AM



“ The USC Lancaster TRiO Programs staff purchased the Medium Dish Garden for the family of Michael Bohonak Jr..



The USC Lancaster TRiO Programs staff - May 21, 2019 at 05:55 PM



“ Betty Thorne lit a candle in memory of Michael Bohonak Jr.



Betty Thorne - May 21, 2019 at 02:18 PM



“ Betty Thorne lit a candle in memory of Michael Bohonak Jr.



Betty Thorne - May 21, 2019 at 02:16 PM



“ Noni, I am keeping you in my thoughts and prays.

Karen Owens

Karen Owens - May 21, 2019 at 12:31 PM



“ To Mikes family: was in his class at Clemson and remember him well!!! Great man and I offer my sincere condolences on your loss. May God hold him gently in his hands. Bill vandiver'64

bill vandiver - May 27, 2019 at 02:19 PM