

JOHN FRANK SZLAPA III

AMS3 - E4 - Navy - Reserve
20 year old Single, Caucasian, Male
Born on Apr 02, 1950
From MT CLEMENS, MICHIGAN
Length of service 2 years.
Casualty was on Dec 15, 1970
NORTH VIETNAM
NON-HOSTILE, FIXED WING - CREW
AIR LOSS, CRASH AT SEA
Body was recovered
Religion
ROMAN CATHOLIC

Panel 06W - - Line 124

John is buried at Resurrection Cemetery, Clinton Twp, MI

I recently heard from John's brother who filled me in on some of the details of John's death.

I was on board the USS Ranger (CVA-61) attached to VF-21 as a RIO. On Dec. 15th, 1970 I was in the ready room watching the flight monitor when we saw the COD (a C-2 cargo plane) being catapulted off of the starboard cat. It cleared the deck and then started this horrendous climb. I remember someone saying "look at the SOB climb." when it veered to the right, rolled over and crashed into the water upside down. It floated past the side of the ship and shortly thereafter sank, with no survivors.

While I did not personally know John, I just recently found out that John was the Plane Captain of that plane. I am also told that William S. Stewart and Carrol J. Deuso were also on that flight and killed along with John.

The information about that accident was that the plane was loaded with a ship generator and that the tie down must have broken with the cat shot and allowed the generator to shift aft, causing the nose of the plane to jump upward and stalling the plane. I was told that, other than the crew and one sailor going home on emergency leave, all of the other passengers were Filipino engineers that had been working in the Ranger's engine room. It was also said that the single non-crew sailor was going home on emergency leave due to his father's recent death.

Submitted by Lt. T.K. Herskowitz 6/13/99

Source: The Virtual Wall

John F. Szlapa

HARRISON TOWNSHIP –John F. Szlapa III ASM-3, of 38564 Willowmere, was killed when a U.S. Navy courier plane of which he was crew captain crashed shortly after it was launched from the Carrier Ranger in the Gulf of Tonkin.

He was born in Detroit April 2, 1950, and moved with his parents to Harrison Township in 1956.

Graduating from L'Anse Creuse High School in 1969. He joined the Navy Reserve in 1968 and entered active duty in September 1969, after working as an orderly at St. Joseph Hospital and Mount Clemens.

Surviving are his parents, Mr. and Mrs. John Szlapa, two sisters, Linda and Claudia, and a brother, Hubert, all at home.

Funeral services will be at 9:30 a.m. Monday at the Will and Schwarzkoﬀ Funeral Home, 233 N. Gratiot, Mt. Clemens, and at 10 a.m. at St. Louis Catholic Church, with burial at Resurrection Cemetery in Clinton Township.

A rosary will be said at the funeral home at 8p.m. Sunday, and full military honors will be accorded at the funeral. Visiting hours are until 9 p.m.

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