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Published by Jack M. Phillips, Class of '54: [jack@jackmphilips.com](mailto:jack@jackmphilips.com)

**This Special Orange & Black  
Memorial Day Military Edition  
Honors Two WHS Living Heroes!**

*Remembering those  
who paid for our  
freedom.*

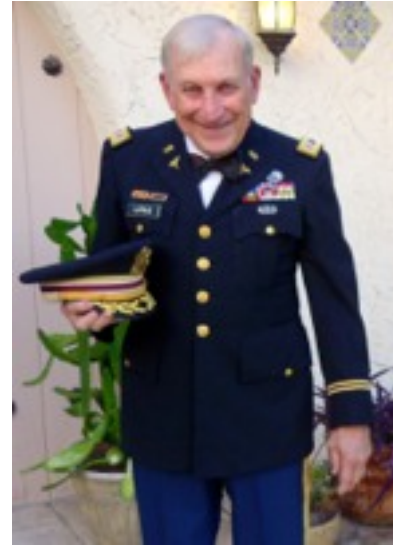


# An Orange & Black Tribute To Two True WHS Vietnam Heroes.



Loren Little '59  
WHS Senior Photo

**United States  
Army  
Lt. Colonel  
Dr. Loren Little MD**  
Washington High School  
Class of 1959



*And*



Don Knutson '54  
WHS Senior Photo

**United States  
Air Force  
Colonel Donald  
O. Knutson**  
Washington High School  
Class of 1954





**Bill Lobe '59**  
**WHS Senior Photo**

# The Dr. Loren Little Story '59

## Submitted By William Lobe '59

On Apr 15, 2014, at 3:50 PM, **William Lobe '59**

<[bill@wclobe.com](mailto:bill@wclobe.com)> wrote:

Jack,

Now that you have your "land legs" back after your cruise and managed to get out your most recent 21-page newsletter, I'd like you to take the time to read this article, [http://www.americanveteransmemorial.org/veterans\\_day\\_speech\\_V78U.html](http://www.americanveteransmemorial.org/veterans_day_speech_V78U.html).

The author of this inspiring patriotic speech, Coulby Dunn, makes reference to Dr. Loren Little's courageous actions in saving lives in Vietnam. I first met Loren, class of '59, at WHS as freshmen in Mr. Hutton's home room in 1956 and have remained in contact ever since.

Loren's accomplishments in medicine and music are well documented, but what he did for me when we were WHS freshmen is equally impressive. I was the only child in a relatively uneducated family where getting passing "C" grades was perfectly acceptable with my family. I shared this with Loren at the time. It was Loren Little who opened my eyes when he told me that just getting passing grades was not acceptable because he knew I could do much better than that. He told me to live up to my potential. That advice changed my life into repeated self-satisfying accomplishments rather than just getting by. So, you see, Jack, Loren Little, other than being a lifelong friend, has always been my hero – long before Vietnam.

I feel this Veterans Day speech transcript is worth referencing in the O&B newsletter if not printed. Washington High School has certainly graduated it fair share of students who have gone on to serve our country, many of whom, sadly, have made the ultimate sacrifice. Loren is a retired eye surgeon and accomplished professional musician living in Las Vegas. As you both reside in Vegas, it would be a shame for you two not to meet in person. It would be mutually satisfying, I'm sure. At your request, I'll provide you with Loren's contact info with his permission. And, who knows, he might share with you some of the things we did and got away with when we were WHS freshmen that I hesitate to divulge here!

Thanks again for your dedication and work on the O&B.

Best Regards,

**Bill Lobe '59**



**Loren Little '59**  
**WHS Senior Photo**



Coulby Dunn had the distinct privilege of serving in all three Airborne units while with the U. S. Army Paratroopers. He served with the 101st Airborne Division at Fort Campbell, Kentucky in 1967, with the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, North Carolina in 1968 - 1969 and with the 173rd Airborne Brigade in Vietnam in 1969 - 1970.

## VETERAN'S DAY SPEECH

*The following is an excerpt from a speech given by Coulby Dunn at the Veterans' Day Program that took place at the Wallenpaupack Area High School on November 9, 2007 with over 1,500 students, parents and veterans in attendance. Click on link above for entire speech.*



“Good evening ladies and gentlemen..... and thank you for joining me this evening as we recognize our veterans for their unwavering service to America.....



**Dr. Little operating on a local. Not exactly state-side sterile conditions.**

While we pay homage to all American Veterans.... I particularly want to thank our Vietnam

veterans this evening..... We served in a war that deeply divided our nation, but America is resilient....we are a country of temperance, compassion and reason.....and with the passage of time we healed our wounds.



**Feb. 6, 1969 Capt. Dr. Loren Little coming in from a fire base. Shows the dirt and grime.**

I know many of you have visited the Vietnam Memorial in Washington DC..... During the day there...the black granite absorbs all the sunlight of the day....then radiates the heat

during the evening hours.....If the evening is cool and crisp... you can see a mist coming off the wall.....For me....Its as if the 58,253 names are breathing life into my body.....and I feel invigorated knowing that these men and women.... gave their lives so all of us can continue to live the American Dream.

I can tell you a short story of one of my heroes from Vietnam. He was Dr. Loren Little, our Battalion doctor with the 173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne. Our small 2 acre base camp came under attack with more than 60 rounds of 82mm mortars and 122mm rockets .....

We had sustained incredible casualties.....more than 90 dead and wounded in a mere 5 minutes..... the carnage and horror was beyond description.....

One of my close friends had sustained multiple fragmentation wounds.....so I ran to the aid station to get a medic or Captain Little....

When I got to the aid station I realized no help would be coming...Men were strewn all over the compound ....many withering and screaming in pain.....It was at that moment I saw the greatest act of courage and heroism and valor.. I would ever witness in my lifetime.....

“Doc” Little was bleeding from both ears, and he had a sunken chest wound.... His bear chest was wrapped in gauze pads. Blood was pouring thru the gauze ....but with a total disregard for his own well being.....I saw Doctor Little administering aid and he saved the lives of at least 15 or 20 soldiers that night.....



Silver Star

Dr. Little in line to go into surgery 3 hours after the battle and 120 miles south of where his firebase was located.

Doc Little practiced Triage that evening...a system of treating soldiers according to the severity of their wounds when resources were insufficient to save everyone.....

That evening, Doc Little's best friend, Major Tedd Lewis was severely wounded and alive.....but died several hours later..... Because of triage...Doc Little could not save the life of his best friend.....Sadly, because of this unbearable experience....Doc Little

never practiced medicine ever again. Ladies and Gentlemen.....this is true courage...this is a true American Hero.

Dr. Little received the nations 3<sup>rd</sup> highest award for heroism and valor that evening of January 9<sup>th</sup> 1970...

He received a Silver Star.....but I can tell you there are 100's of Doc Littles all across America...as a matter of fact there are probably a few of them right here.... in this building sitting before you.....May God bless them all."

Coulby Dunn

4<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 503<sup>rd</sup> Infantry

173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne Brigade, Vietnam



Cleft palate - this little girl from a small village had a bad case. Dr Little helped to partially restore her. Her mom and the district health chief are there. Tam Quan district, City of Quin Nhon in Binh Dinh Province.

Editors note: Loren wrote me the following note regarding Coulby Dunn's speech. *"I never said I wouldn't practice medicine - Dunn got that wrong. What I said was I didn't want to deal with death and blood (on a large scale) hence, Eye Surgery."*





Loren, being interviewed on TV,



Dr. Little, left, a most accomplished trumpet player, sitting in with the brigade band with a grenade in his pocket. More on Loren's musical side in the next issue of the O&B.

*Loren,  
Thank You,  
and a Happy  
Memorial Day to  
you and Christy!*

Dr. Little obtained his MD at the University of Washington, Seattle, Washington. After obtaining his MD, Dr. Little entered the U.S. Army in 1968 and was the recipient of several awards including: Silver Star, Purple Heart, Bronze Stars, Air Medals, CMB, Parachutist Badge, ARCOM, VSM, VTSM, VCM, V. Cross of Gallantry, JCSC Medal and NDM. He completed his residency in Ophthalmology at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, DC.

### Some of Lt. Colonel Little's Medals Earned During His 7 1/2 Year Military Career.





Loren and wife Christy enjoy life here in Las Vegas, NV where he still works 3 days a week as an Ophthalmologist at Nevada Eye Care, consulting and seeing patients. He no longer performs major surgery, but Loren has told me repeatedly how much he enjoys, “playing gigs” (trumpet), all around Las Vegas, including gigs at “The Smith Center”, our new and prestigious world class performing arts center. More to come on Loren in the June issue of the O&B.

## **Many thanks to Bill Lobe '59**

for making the O&B aware of

## **The Dr. Loren Little Story!**

After considerable research on Dr. Little, I just keep learning more and more about what a remarkable and talented man he is. In fact, there is so much more about this very special 1959 WHS graduate that is worth sharing with you I feel I must do a follow up story on him in the June O&B issue. However, in this Memorial Day Military Edition I have just concentrated on his distinguished humanitarian and heroic military career in Vietnam.

Jack Phillips, Editor





**Don Knutson '54  
WHS Senior Photo**

# The Colonel Don Knutson Story '54

## Edited & Expanded:

Each year when our great country celebrates Memorial Day my American pride always wells up inside as I am sure it does with most of you since we are from the generation that always stands when our American flag passes in front of us. Since it is a National Holiday set aside to honor the brave heroes of our military service I always feel it appropriate to re-publish this rewritten tribute to Colonel Donald O. Knutson that I wrote 5 years ago. The mailing list for the O&B has significantly increased in numbers since I last published the full length version, so I am sure many of you are unaware of what a true American hero our Don Knutson is and of his highly decorated and heroic military career.

Don and I were both in the WHS class of 1954 and I first learned a bit about his incredible acts of bravery at our 50th reunion, but the thought of his heroism stayed with me long after I returned home. The more I thought about the very real and terrifying dangers Don faced and endured for all of us, the more I felt his story should be more widely told. I finally called Don and asked for his permission to let me share with you some of the unbelievable stories of his duty in Viet Nam as a fighter pilot in the U.S. Air Force.

I am in possession of a copy of the biography the United States Air Force has prepared on Colonel Knutson and it is indeed an impressive document. And yes, it even includes Don graduating from Washington High School. When Don graduated from pilot training school as a cadet and was commissioned a second lieutenant in the U.S. Air Force he was just 20 years old and at the time was the youngest jet fighter pilot and second lieutenant in the U.S. Air Force.

Don flew 394 combat missions over Laos and Vietnam. 394 is a staggering number of combat missions for one man to fly.

Here, in black, are a few highlights taken from Don's official Air Force Biography that I think deserve special mention.

***"Colonel Knutson attended undergraduate pilot training at Bryan AFB, Texas as a cadet and was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Air Force upon graduation. Just 20 years old at***



**Don as he looked on his very first day as a brand new Colonel.**

***the time, he held the distinction of being the youngest jet fighter pilot and second lieutenant in the United States Air Force. He graduated from F-86 Jet Fighter Gunnery School at Williams Air Force Base, Ariz, after which he flew various jet all weather interrupter aircraft (F-94C, F-89J, F-102). Colonel Knutson was subsequently assigned to Williams Air Force Base, Ariz, as an instructor pilot in T-33, T-37 and T-38 Jet aircraft.***



**Oct. 1956: Don in Vietnam with his F-86 Sabre Jet. Photo taken just 8 months after his 20th B-Day. And just over 2 years after graduating from WHS.**



**Colonel Knutson was assigned to the 20 TASS at DaNang, South Vietnam as a forward air controller where he flew 344 combat missions in Laos and 50 missions over North Vietnam in the F-4 Phantom and 0-1 aircraft. After being shot down twice, he was awarded two Distinguished Flying Crosses and was later assigned to USAF Special Operations, Tactical Air Command and instructor, flying 0-1 and 0-2 aircraft in the Forward Air Controller Program; psychological warfare instructor flying the U-10 aircraft followed by assignment to the Special Operations Force Headquarters as chief of standardization/evaluation for the Forward Air Controller Program.**

**After completion of an advanced degree program, he was assigned to the personnel career field as Chief, Career Control Section at Maxwell AFB, Ala, followed by assignment as Chief, CBPO at Air University, Maxwell AFB, Ala.**

**From 1977-81 he was assigned to U.S. Forces Japan Joint Headquarters as Chief, Labor Branch (J-5) for all U.S. Forces in Japan and Okinawa. On October 31, 1981, he became Director of Personnel, for Systems Command at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla. March 31, 1984 he was assigned as Director of Personnel, 63rd Air Base Group, Norton Air Force Base, Calif.**

**Colonel Knutson is a graduate of Squadron Officers School, Air Command and Staff College, and the Industrial College of the Armed Forces.**

**Colonel Knutson is a command pilot and logged over 5,200 military flying hours, and over 400 hours as a commercial pilot.**

**Colonel Knutson's awards and decorations include the Distinguished Service Medal, Two Distinguished Flying Crosses, Four Meritorious Service Medals, Fifteen Air Medals, Distinguished-Presidential Unit Citation, Two Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards, Two Combat Readiness Medals, Good Conduct Medal,**



**Don & a buddy in Vietnam in 1967**

**National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, Air Force Overseas Short Tour Ribbon, Air Force Overseas Long Tour Ribbon, Air Force Longevity Service Award Ribbon with six devices, Small Arms expert Marksmanship Ribbon, Air Force Training Ribbon, Two Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Crosses and the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal.**

**Colonel Knutson was awarded the Order of the Rising Sun Medal (second highest award in the Japanese government) by the Emperor of Japan in October 1981 upon completion of his tour as Chief, Labor Branch, J-5 at Yokota, AB Japan."**



**Don's membership card in the "Mach Buster's Club" signifying that in October of 1956 he flew faster than the speed of sound.**



During the second half of Don's Vietnam tour he flew special missions over Laos as a Forward Air Controller (FAC) in the O-1 aircraft above. He was shot down by ground fire as he was flying this plane at 1000 feet at 70 knots (92 mph) while hunting for Vietnamese targets. The O-1 is appropriately nicknamed, "Birdog". When his plane was hit he was able to reduce his altitude to just above the 60 foot tall jungle tree tops, allow the plane to slow to stall speed of 50 knots and allow it to violently drop into the tree tops.

Don was shot down behind enemy lines on two of his missions and no doubt survived because of his excellent training, his own tough tenacity and the grace of God. On the first occasion the Vietcong searched for him all night and were so dangerously close he could hear them talking and walking within feet of where he was hiding.

I would like for each of you to try imagining this frightening scenario. It was very late afternoon, just about dusk. Don had just completed a bombing run somewhere over North Vietnam. He

was just starting to pull up out of the run at 350 miles an hour and at an altitude of about 800 feet when his plane was hit by enemy fire.

He was over a thick jungle, deep behind enemy lines and was forced to bail out. He knew Vietcong patrols would be rapidly converging on his location searching for him. Sure enough, he heard them coming almost immediately but was able to find a temporary hiding place. Through out the night they were close enough that he worried they would hear his heart pounding. It was now dark and he knew there was no chance of a rescue until the next morning. He was forced to continually move from one hiding place to another through out the night to avoid being found. It had to be one of the longest and most frightening nights anyone ever spent.

The other members of his squadron had circled while his parachute descended and recorded his exact location. He knew rescue helicopters would arrive at first light. He just had to stay alive and avoid capture through the night.

American helicopters did arrive the next morning and Don, using a mirror, was able to signal them his location. Under heavy enemy fire one of the helicopters was able to come in for the pickup. The rescue helicopter was under such heavy fire, they couldn't even wait to reel Don in. As soon as he was in the rescue sling, the helicopter elevated just enough for Don to clear the tree tops and took off with him swinging like a puppet on a string far below the helicopter to a safe landing.



**The Order of The Rising Sun Ceremony**

l - r; Japanese Minister of Labor and Deputy, Don's Aide, Colonel Knutson, Japanese Prime Minister Suzuki, Japanese Minister of Defense and Deputy.



The other time Don was shot down his plane was disabled by ground fire. This time by flying just above the tree line and slowing his speed to 50 knots, which is stall speed, his plane fell/crashed into the top of a thick grove of tall trees where it came to a crashing halt entangled in the tree tops.

Again, he knew the enemy would be there very quickly so he hurriedly scrambled out of his precariously dangling plane that is hanging in the tree tops 60 feet above the ground and shimmies down the trees, injuring his shoulder in the process. But this time there was enough daylight left that rescue helicopters were able to pick him up within a relatively short time.

In addition to Don's two Distinguished Flying Crosses and approximately 38 other medals, he received one other extremely high and special honor that should be noted. In 1981 he was personally awarded the "Order of the Rising Sun" medal by the Emperor of Japan. It is the Japanese government's 2nd highest award.

I hope you are as moved and as impressed as I am with the Don Knutson story. I can't imagine anyone not sharing my feelings that Don Knutson is truly a very special man, an extremely courageous American and a super patriot that freedom loving men and women all over the world owe such a huge and totally un-payable debt of gratitude. I wish I could share his story with the entire world!



I would like to end this story on Don with a bit of humor. Don and an Air Force buddy recently took an 11 day Caribbean cruise together and on the two formal nights chose to wear their Air Force dress uniforms. (As seen in above Photo )

Because Don was the much more decorated officer of the two officers, the ladies on the ship continually mistook took Don for the Captain of the ship and he had the most enjoyable task of having to dance with them all. Don loves to dance.



**Colonel Knutson receiving congratulations from Japanese Prime Minister Susuki after receiving "Order of the Rising Sun" medal from the Emperor in 1981.**



**Colonel Knutson posing with the Special Assistant to the Emperor, Mr. Nisioka and his wife after receiving the "Order of the Rising Sun" medal.**



**Photo from the 1951 Warrior; the officers of Miss Furrow's Freshman home room, #305. l-r: Jim "Whitey" Watson president, Don Knutson VP, Dick Erickson secretary & L. Morris treasurer. It is hard to believe that little Donnie Knutson would be a jet pilot breaking the sound barrier just 5 short years later. Very impressive! WAY TO GO DON!**



# Some of Colonel Knutson's Medals Earned During His 36 Year Military Career.

**Defense  
Distinguished  
Service Medal**



**Two**

**Distinguished  
Flying Cross**



**Four**

**Meritorious  
Service Medal**



**Fifteen**

**Air  
Medals**



Air Medal

**National Defense  
Service Medal**



**Vietnam Service  
Medal**



**Order of the Rising Sun  
旭日章**



*As always Don, we all hope you have a wonderful Memorial Day. See you at our 60th Reunion in September. Jack Phillips '54*

Editors closing note on Dr. Loren Little '59 and Don Knutson '54: If you would like to express your appreciation to either or both of these brave men please send your emails to the O&B and I will be most happy to publish them.

Don Knutson '54, yes, the same Colonel Don Knutson you just read about above, sent the O&B a story on another American hero, Van T. Barfoot, that died in 2012. Colonel Barfoot was a Medal of Honor recipient and made news in 2009 when he defied his Homeowners Assoc. and refused to take down the flag pole on his property along with the large American Flag he flew on it. It is a great story that Don wanted to share with all of us. I hope you will click on it and read it.

## Van T. Barfoot died

Just click on this link.

[Col. Van Barfoot Medal of Honor recipient dies at 92 | Medal ...](#)



*Sergeant Van Barfoot, later promoted to second lieutenant, earned the Medal of Honor while serving with L Company, 157th Infantry Regiment. (Courtesy of 45th Infantry Division Archives)*

(From "The Rock of Anzio" with permission of Flint Whitlock)



**God Bless America**