

Obituary: Gordon L Bendick
Nov 12, 1950 - Sept 4, 2023

Colonel (Ret) Gordon L. "Gordy" Bendick, age 72, of Edmond, OK, passed away peacefully September 4, 2023, following an extended illness.

As Gordy departed this earth, he left behind him a million smiles and giggles, predominantly among them those of his three children: Andrew McDonald Bendick, Katherine "Kate" Bendick (Brad) Gallagher, and Emily Bendick (Nathan) Poppe.

Gordy was born in Sioux Falls, SD in 1950 to the late Arthur Jr. and Alice (Johnson) Bendick. He was preceded in death by his oldest brother Arthur Bendick, III and will be missed by siblings Phillip (Heidi) Bendick of Vass, NC; Robert (Kathy) Bendick of Amelia, OH; Betsy (Mike) Neahring; as well as his niece and nephews.

From Sioux Falls, to Hudson, IA, to Sterling, IL, Gordy made fast friends quickly and genuinely. Academics and athletics came easily to him as he moved through the public schools, earning a national ranking as a young tennis player and a role on his high school football team that drew the attention of Air Force Academy coaches considering a Sterling teammate. With the confident persuasion of his mom, Gordy went on to apply for and receive a nomination and appointment to the United States Air Force Academy, Class of 1973.

Once at the Academy (thanks for the ride, Kathy), Gordy's Air Force adventures began in earnest. Encouraged by the brotherhood of the Ninth Squadron, Cadet "Stump" Bendick participated in countless intramural Academy sports, as well as leadership roles at squadron and group levels. Three short days after 2nd Lt Bendick's June 6, 1973, USAFA graduation, the family reconvened in Oklahoma City for his wedding to Debra K. McDonald.

Gordy's first assignment after graduation was pilot training at Williams AFB, AZ, followed by further training at Castle AFB in the KC-135 and a subsequent assignment at Barksdale AFB, LA. The remainder of Gordy's career often witnessed him out of the cockpit and in a classroom or office, including time at Squadron Officers' School, the Air Force Institute of Technology (Masters of Science), and Air Command and Staff College. Positions in research, development, and quality included time at the Pentagon on the B1 and with the 6510th Test Wing's B-1B program.

Pentagon and White House assignments were easily Gordy's favorites over his twenty-five year career. His Academy political science major was never a greater advantage than during his years "on the hill" as an Air Force legislative liaison, with the National Security Council as Director of Legislative Affairs and later at the White House. Following his 1998 retirement from the Air Force, Gordy pursued civilian employment with both AT&T and BAE (British Aerospace).

The Air Force Commendation Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Air Force Longevity Service Award, Combat Readiness Medal, Air Force Training Ribbon Small Arms Expert Marksmanship Ribbon, Air Force Outstanding Unit Award, and Air Force Organizational Excellence Award were all proud accomplishments of Colonel Bendick.

While his career accomplishments were considerable, none was more dear than his role as a father and grandfather. His children have countless tales of fun times with "Gordo," all including laughter and hijinks of the highest order. Sneaking in a few extra holes with Andy in the Edwards AFB golf cart meant colorful vocabulary lessons known as "golf terms" and exciting rides across the desert course that may or may not have resulted in a five-year old somersaulting down to the green in a maneuver remembered as "Mr. Toad's Wild Ride." Kate shared her dad's love for a great radio duet, especially with the car windows open wide, voices blasting rock 'n roll as they counted down the miles to Ocean City beaches. Sweet Emily won her dad's heart from the very first and tugged on it every day after - from pretending under the willow tree in the backyard at Edwards to fancy daddy-daughter dining in D.C.; they were an interesting pair! To this day, each of the Bendick kids holds special and unique-to-only-them memories of their dad. Even the two newest Bendicks, the Gallagher grandkids Maggie and Jack, had time to experience special occasions and memories of their "Gordo."

Gordon will be laid to rest at the U. S. Air Force Academy Cemetery, Colorado Springs, CO in the autumn weeks to come. Final arrangements are forthcoming and will be shared as soon as possible.

Gordon will be laid to rest at a graveside ceremony at the U. S. Air Force Academy Cemetery, Colorado Springs, CO, on November 20, 2023 at 1300 hours. Memorial gifts in Gordon's name to the National Character and Leadership Symposium are encouraged. Please address gifts to "Class of 1973 Endowment for NCLS" and mail to Air Force Academy Foundation, 3116 Academy Dr, USAF Academy, CO 80840.