

keith thomas

Subject: FW: Statement to Veterans Administration

-----Original Message-----

From: monterclark@suddenlink.net [<mailto:monterclark@suddenlink.net>]

Sent: Thursday, May 08, 2014 11:08 AM

To: keiththomas79@gmail.com; gibbsone@hotmail.com; pwfox75@att.net

Subject: Our service together

8 May 2014

To Whom it may Concern:

I was transferred to AEWBARRONPAC at NAS Barbers Point, Hawaii in July 1960, where I was assigned as an Airborne Radar Operator. Two of my roommates were assigned to a flight crew supervised by Orville Keith Thomas. This is how I met Mr. Thomas. We established instant rapport, as we shared the same birthday. I attended several functions in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas in Hawaii and later in Tennessee. In January 1961, I was able to be assigned to his Combat Information Center Crew. That same month, after our third reconnaissance mission to the Aleutian Islands, our aircraft crashed on landing returning to Midway Island. Six of our crew were killed in the accident along with three ground personnel. While most of us had a really bad ride in a rolling, burning 70-ton aircraft. Mr. Thomas was in the midsection of the plane where five of the six crew members were killed. He was literally only two or three feet away from four of them. None of the rest of the crew had to watch any of their buddies be killed right in front of them.

Later I reenlisted to attend Aviation Electronic Technicians school at NATTC, Memphis, in Millington, Tenn. I there re-connected with Mr. Thomas who had also reenlisted.

In all of the time I was associated with Mr. Thomas, not once did I personally witness any bouts of instability in his actions. As I recall, he was an excellent student, certainly a good leader and a superb shipmate.

It was not until much later, after we were both out of the Navy, that he told me a little about his problems. Although in 1963, I did get a call from his wife that he was in the hospital for emotional problems. We reconnected during a squadron reunion after 43 years. Keith Thomas is and has always been a very good friend, and it was a privilege and an honor to have served with him.

Monte R. Clark
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