



(Left) Pre-chaplain days flying F-4 Phantom II with 366 TFW Danang Vietnam (Right) Rick Blank, California State Guard Command Chaplain, Gives Invocation at 7MAR20 Distinguished Flying Cross Memorial Dedication at Miramar National Cemetery

Chaplain Rick Blank provided the invocation at the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) memorial dedication at Miramar National Cemetery. Rick serves as Command Chaplain California State Guard and also fills in as Deputy State Chaplain and serves as chaplain for the Distinguished Flying Cross Society.

Fifty years ago Rick with his wife Ruth were stationed at George AFB in Victorville completing F-4 training soon to depart for the 366<sup>th</sup> Tac Fighter Wing at Danang Air Base in Vietnam. At Danang he served in the wing scheduling shop determining ordnance loads and assigning flight missions to the three squadrons in the 366<sup>th</sup>. He flew 248 combat missions and was awarded two DFCs, fourteen Air Medals and the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Palm.

When home in San Diego he drills with the 147<sup>th</sup> Combat Communications Squadron and also provides chapel services at the California Army National Guard's San Diego Recruit Sustainment Platoon. No stranger to Miramar National Cemetery and Fort Rosecrans, he often joins with the Honors Team and leads memorial services for fallen soldiers and airmen.

In addition to Rick's service as a chaplain, the family has a long military history from Stephen Bachiler's 1632 arrival until the present with multiple family members serving in the Pequot War, King Phillip's War, French and Indian War, Revolutionary War, Civil War, World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan. Rick's father flew B-25s in World War II and C-46s and C119s in Korea and directed OSI operations in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War. Rick served on active duty 4 years in the Navy and 22 in the Air Force. Son, Daniel, flew the UH-60 Blackhawk in Iraq and Afghanistan and is currently assigned to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Assault Helicopter Battalion with the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division at Fort Riley where he just returned from deployment and is scheduled for another combat tour next February.