Operations building honors legendary flight engineer

by Airman 1st Class
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Public Affairs

Members of the 20th Special Operations Squadron honored one of their heroes April 17 by naming their new operations building after Chief Master Sgt. John D. Selfridge, during a memorial ceremony at the 55th Aircraft Maintenance Unit Hangar.

Selfridge, who died of a cancer in 1993, was a highly decorated Vietnam veteran with more than 20 years of military service, 14 of those with the 20th SOS. During his Air Force career, he accumulated 5,525 flight hours, including 300 combat hours during 132 combat missions.

More than 150 people came to dedicate the 30,700-square foot building, dubbed Selfridge Hall, named after one of the most respected helicopter flight engineers and people in special operations, according to Col. Steve Connelly, Headquarters Air Force Special Operations Command director of operations.

"He was the consummate volunteer. He was the professional NCO. He trained lieutenants, he trained captains, he taught us what it meant to be a flight engineer," Connelly said. "When we looked for the first flight engineers out of the 20th SOS when the MH-53s came ... it was the likes of legends like John Selfridge who came across."

Selfridge Hall, which is located on the base's east side across from the base exchange and commissary complex, will house the "Green Hornets." The 20th SOS aircrews conduct day or night low-level penetration into hostile or enemy territory to accomplish clandestine special operations. To fly these dangerous operations, the Green Hornets fly the Air Force's most sophisticated and technologically advanced helicopter, the MH-53J Pave Low III.

So that no one would ever forget his memory, the 20th SOS constucted and designed a plaque which will be placed on Selfridge Hall. A replica of the plaque was given to Selfridge's brother Tom, who was accompanied to the ceremony by his brother Andy, and John's daughters Kim Harris and Justine.

Tom said that it was a great honor to see his brothers legacy survive.

"As many times as John tried to create a home in many places, his one home was here at the 20th SOS," his brother said. "I just hope John will be remembered as the heart and soul of what it took to be a member of this unit."

Hurlburt dedicates building to airman

HURLBURT FIELD — A Vietnam War-era special operations airman has been honored at Hurlburt Field with a building dedicated to his memory.

The new headquarters building for the 20th Special Operations Squadron has been named Selfridge Hall in remembrance of Chief Master Sgt. John D. Selfridge.

Selfridge spent 25 years in the Air Force and another four years as a Marine. During the Vietnam War, Selfridge flew 132 combat missions, typically as a helicopter flight engineer, and logged more than 5,500 flight hours. Among his awards was the Distinguished Flying Cross.

After retiring from the Air Force, Selfridge settled in Fort Walton Beach. He died from cancer in 1993.

A ceremony dedicating Selfridge Hall was held Friday, with many of the former airman's family attending.