

## IN MEMORIAM

**Marshall H. McNamara, MHS Class of 1952  
Gave his life for his country on 15 April 1969**

Freedom is not free. In spite of the rosy proclamations about peace everlasting after the end of World War II, the superpowers engaged in massive airborne intelligence gathering activities and probes during the “Cold War” – and for some the Cold War turned out to be very hot. Periodically the Russians and Chinese were successful in shooting down some of our reconnaissance aircraft, usually killing all onboard. Since the intelligence gathering missions were highly classified, civilians were told, if necessary, that the aircraft had been doing weather reconnaissance, made a navigational error, etc. But the list of our men who gave their all for their country kept growing – although no war was declared.

In the late 1960s, the U.S. Navy’s Patrol Reconnaissance Squadron VQ-1 flying EC-121Ms was based at Atsugi Naval Air Station, Japan. The squadron’s mission: to gather electronic intelligence about Chinese and Russian military activities for the National Security Agency.

The EC-121M was an elaborately equipped eavesdropper and radar detector packed into the fuselage of a Lockheed Super Constellation passenger liner. The plane’s radar picked up radar signals used to warn of an attack. Another of the plane’s radars moved up and down to determine how high the beams extended. Still others showed the direction the radar was coming from so the radar site itself could be pinpointed. And the radio frequency of the radar – a vital piece of information – was also picked up. Knowing the frequency of the radar enabled the U.S. to design jamming equipment to negate its effectiveness in wartime. The plane also carried antennas under its belly – presumably for picking up military radio communications, often indicative of the state of readiness of opposing military forces and their future deployments. The EC-121M carried a crew of 18 to more than 30 flight and intelligence specialists. Marshall H. McNamara was a crew member of EC-121M, call sign “Deep Sea 129”, on 15 April 1969.

Deep Sea 129, with a crew of 31, took off from Atsugi Naval Air Station for a routine intelligence gathering mission at 6:59 a.m. on 15 April 1969. It proceeded to its operational area over the Sea of Japan off the coast of North Korea. Approximately six hours into the mission, southeast of Chongjin, North Korea, two North Korean MIGs attacked Deep Sea 129 and shot it down in cold blood over international waters with a loss of 31 lives.

We can only remember Mac as he was in high school – friendly, outgoing, athletic, and fun to be with. He decided to become a career Navy man and was doing a very important job for the security of the United States. While doing that, he made the ultimate sacrifice - and became the first and only warrior of the Class of '52 who gave his life so that the rest of us and our children could live our lives as free men and women. Mac – we appreciate what you did for us and we will never forget you!

Links with details on the shooting and the impact on it to the U.S. and the world:

<http://www.551and552-aewc.org/shootdown/shoot.htm>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1969\\_EC-121\\_shootdown\\_incident](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1969_EC-121_shootdown_incident)

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