

# Lord Guard & Guide

## David O. Schillerstrom

Dave Schillerstrom, who was stricken with polio as a young officer at Torrejon Air Base, Spain, but overcame the disease to serve 30 years in Public Affairs, ending his career as SAF/PA Deputy Director, died March 13, after a 3-month battle with cancer. He was 84.

Interment at Arlington National Cemetery from the Old Post Chapel at Fort Myer with Full Military Honors will be at 11 a.m., Friday, August 22. A reception at the Fort Myer Officers' Club will follow. Those planning to attend the reception should RSVP by Sunday, August 17, to: carolgstrom@gmail.com or 703 524-8963.

David was born in Gibson City, Illinois. He graduated from Hinsdale High School, Hinsdale, Illinois, and from the University of Illinois in 1954 with a BA in English literature. He earned his MA in public administration from The George Washington University in 1966.

His early assignments included Turner AFB, Georgia; the 17th Bombardment Wing, Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio; and Strategic Air Command Headquarters, Offutt AFB, Nebraska. After completing Air Command and Staff College in 1966, he was a special projects officer in the Directorate for Plans and Programs, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense, Public Affairs.

He served at 7th Air Force Headquarters in Vietnam, returning in 1970 to become executive officer to the Air Force Director of Information.

Dave was appointed SAC Director of Information in 1977, serving there until he became SAF/PA Deputy Director in 1980. He retired from the Air Force as a colonel in 1984. That was not the end of Dave's Public Affairs career, he became Vice President of Communications for the Aerospace Industries Association; a post he held for ten years.

He is survived by his wife of more than 62 years, Carol Schillerstrom; son, David A. Schillerstrom; daughters Linda C. Schillerstrom and Karen Brownsword. Donations may be made in Dave's name to Capital Caring Hospice, 4715 15th Street N, Arlington VA 22205; The Salvation Army; the AFPAAA Endowment Fund, or the charity of your choice.

Dave Schillerstrom was a legend in Air Force public affairs – a respected leader, expert communicator, outstanding mentor, and valued friend.

He was one of the real trailblazers in our business and demonstrated that one didn't have to wear wings to achieve the rank of colonel and provide wise counsel to senior Air Force leaders.

Dave and his effervescent wife, Carol, set the example for many of us junior officers and our spouses – they knew how to entertain, have fun, and make lasting friendships. They were ardent golfers and a real joy to be with on the course. One of my favorite memories was when Dave played golf with me and Florida State coach Bobby Bowden at a charity tournament outside DC. Hearing these guys trade stories and jokes on the course is something I'll never forget.

As Dave was nearing the end, I'm glad so many of his friends stopped by, called, or wrote to let him know how much both he and Carol had touched our lives. Though Dave was a very humble man, I know this outpouring of love provided him with some comfort in his final days. Let us not grieve but celebrate the life of this great man, patriot, and friend – here's to you, Dave!

– Art Forster

*All of Air Force Public Affairs lost one of its most beloved, respected leaders and all of us lost a very special friend when Dave left us.*

*No one person shared more wisdom, gave more experienced advice, saved as many careers, and cared more for his colleagues and friends than Dave Schillerstrom. He was clearly one of the most unselfish, compassionate, gentlemen, and friends anyone could want to know. He set a standard for life we all wished to achieve.*

*Dave's touch on each of us was a true blessing. With his clever, kind and thoughtful wit and more practical experience than anyone could hope to call upon – he made us all feel very special and important. When many of us faced terrible adversity he was there with a generous, sincere, and caring spirit to help us through. He cared.*

*Under the dictionary words "respect", "admiration", "integrity", "friendship", "professionalism" and "gentleman" it would be no surprise to find Dave's name in each description - in all caps and bold face. We know Dave fought his fight with grace, brave strength, and even mustered good cheer to those he spoke and visited with during his last weeks.*

*We miss him greatly now and always will.*

– Mike McRaney

Dave was a giant in the Air Force and as a valued friend. I am much better off having served for three years as his reserve IMA at SAF/PA during his time as Deputy Director. Everyone who was fortunate to be associated with Dave, benefited from his steady strength, wisdom, and advice.

I will forever be grateful that he chose me to work by his side, and for over 35 years permitted me to be a close friend. AFPAAA is also a big winner by having him support its many activities, especially the Endowment Fund. We will all miss having Dave Schillerstrom around.

– Jim Hart

*The home going of Dave is a loss and a blessing. Dave was an All-Star deputy and teammate when I served as Director. Any success came with Dave's input and wisdom. We are all better we had Dave Schillerstrom*

*as a friend. His impact on our lives is profound.*

– Dick Abel

It occurred to me that of the living ISOs/PIOs/IOs/PAs, I had known Dave longer than any one else in the business. He attended a SAC ISO conference at Offutt in October 1954. He was a second lieutenant from a SAC fighter escort wing at Turner AFB, Georgia. He made a presentation on some phase of the Internal Info program he had established. I was a recently minted captain and ISO of the 3902nd ABW at Offutt. I made a presentation on crash kits and other preparations for handling crashes.

Dave was chief of the Ops Branch of SAFOI's PI Division when I was Director. He had been passed over several times for colonel (due to a dumb OER written by an Army colonel who was a big fan of Dave's, but didn't understand promotions to colonel and the words needed to ensure selection). Despite successive pass-overs, Dave never quit, never complained, never felt sorry for himself, and kept charging. The people in the PI Division, below and above him, really liked and respected Dave. I was finally able to get him promoted with some help from SECAF who endorsed his OER. He was then sent to SAC as Director and later he came back as Deputy Director in SAFOI. He really should have been Director and a BG at some time. I seriously doubt if we will ever see his kind again.

– Jerry Dalton

*Dave was Deputy to Dick Abel and a great guy. A real pro who took on tough problems with cool thinking and solutions came with it. When I took over the ops branch at SAF/PA the Titan missile blew out of its hole and we were waiting for SAC to give us some word for the pentagon press corps. The release was delayed and Dave walked in (he was the former SAC PA) and*

had information we didn't have. Virginia Pribyla put it together and we pressed on!

– William Young

I never worked for or with Dave, but like everyone else of our generation in the PIO/ISO/IO/PA business, knew him by reputation, which was beyond equal. The good guys keep dropping off the merry-go-round.

– Charlie Brown

A magnificent man and role model for generations of us.

– Michael L. Warden

Dave was the PA all of us wanted to be. He was respected by his bosses for his counsel, even if it didn't always please them. He guided and took care of those fortunate to work for him, and he took the inevitable hits rather than passing them along.

He showed in his work, and in his personal life with his beloved Carol and their children, what it meant to be a gentleman. I will always treasure the time I was privileged to spend with him, and we're all better for having had him coaching our team. In his new assignment, when The Boss needs some advice, He'll know where to go.

– Alan DeFend

I first met Dave when he reported for duty as Information Officer about 1957 at Torrejon Air Base at Madrid, Spain. At that time I was in the Sixteenth Air Force Headquarters Information Office, also at Torrejon. He was a bright young man and we all became friends. It was at that point that Dave came down with Polio and it was a terrible shock to all of us. He was airlifted to Germany for extensive care. He was still in Germany when my tour was up and I reported to HQ SAC at Offutt AFB.

Dave recovered and he returned to the U.S. and was the Information Officer for a SAC Bomb Wing at Wright-Patterson AFB. Later, we both were on duty in the Pentagon. He was assigned to SAFOI and I was at OSD/PA. He and his lovely wife were an outstanding couple and a great asset to the USAF.

– Jack R. Olsen

I first met Dave Schillerstrom during a TDY to the Pentagon in 1976, just a fleeting meet-and-greet by a first-time visitor from SAC headquarters. About a year later, he came to Omaha as the new SAC/PA Director and plucked me out of the community relations back shop to be his executive officer. Thus began our 37-year friendship.

Whether in the Air Force or later as a public relations executive, Dave Schillerstrom was a natural leader, a brilliant communicator, and a true gentleman. He loved people and defined being a people-person. Dave surrounded himself with bright, young men and women; mentored countless individuals throughout their lives, and shaped more than a few professional careers. His friendships were many and long-lasting, instantly renewed even after periods of separation. Dave Schillerstrom was a man of integrity. With him truth led the way, and it always won out, not always easy in our business.

On a lighter note, having lunch with Dave was an interesting experience, whether careening around Omaha in the "Queen Mary", his big Lincoln Town Car or later at an exotic District of Columbia bistro. Lunch was a special time for him, a mix of fellowship and business. He was a master at bringing people together and it was usually over lunch. Many came away satisfied by more than the food.

I am but one of a legion of Dave Schillerstrom followers, friends and colleagues. I will miss his wry smile, quick wit, and cheerful demeanor. But most of all I will miss a dear friend and mentor.

May God bless you David Owen Schillerstrom, and comfort Carol and the family.

– David J. Rigby

To have David Schillerstrom as my mentor from my first lieutenant days was one of the greatest privileges of my entire career. To have been befriended and loved by him and his gracious wife Carol for the past 37 years surpasses any definition of privilege. David was the epitome of a courtly gentleman, a superb officer, and a fiercely loyal friend, but that does not begin to cover what he meant to us.

He was an example of all that is fine in mankind, with never a negative word about any of the people with whom he served. I marveled at his humility, his generosity, his wry sense of humor, and his intelligence.

As I sat by his bed in hospice, I took that opportunity to try and tell him what he has meant to me for so long. And in typical David fashion, he squeezed my hand and said, "Well, don't you think we've spent enough time telling each other how great we are?" That was my mentor, my friend, and a solid bedrock in my life, David Schillerstrom.

– Virginia Pribyla

My first Pentagon media job was with Dave Schillerstrom in Media Relations. Dave let you work your weapon-system projects and encouraged you to get to know the media interested in your projects. He also encouraged

his action officers to become part of the weapon-system team within the Pentagon. He expected to be kept informed, and he was always available for guidance. He was not a micro-manager.

My first year to work for Dave was 1974, more than 40 years ago, and we continued a personal and professional relationship for over 40 years. In November Carolyn and I got to have lunch with Dave and Carol near their Florida condo, and to paraphrase Art Forster, lunch with Dave and Carol was fun.

Dave's guidance and thoughts were always right on, he was a positive guy, and that was contagious. His professional public affairs guidance and influence has helped all of us that worked for him in our after the Air Force lives. Dave Schillerstrom embodied the attributes of love, respect, professionalism and friendship. He was that boss who was a friend while working for him, and after we graduated from the Air Force public affairs career field to the civilian public relations career field he was still our friend. Thanks Dave and Carol for your wonderful friendship.

– Mike Terrill

Dave Schillerstrom was a dedicated Air Force Officer and a good friend to virtually everyone. During my tour of duty at SAF/PA Dave was as helpful as he could possibly be and always provided assistance whenever it was needed. It was a pleasure to associate with him and gain from his experience as both an Air Force Officer and a professional communicator.

Dave's friendly manner and his considerate way of doing things made him a bright spot in our lives and in all of those individuals' lives that he touched. There is no doubt that Dave left his positive mark on all of us and we can be glad that we had the privilege of having known and served with him. He will be missed!

– Carey Deckard

It is impossible to list the names of those whose careers, including mine, have been positively affected by Dave Schillerstrom. He was a mentor, inspiration, and friend to all who were fortunate to have worked with him. In addition to providing me with valuable career advice and counsel, in 1988 when he was Vice President of Communications for the Aerospace Industries Association, Dave brokered my job with Hughes Aircraft Company. We have suffered a great loss.

– Dave Shea

