

JOHN SKORO (DECEASED)
OBITUARY BY
Robert F. Winegar '63, M.D.& P.A.

I met Johnny Skoro during BCT. I'm not even sure what unit he was in, but I always looked forward to seeing him because it just didn't seem to be getting to him like it was most of us. He seemed to be enjoying himself!

In the fall we both went to Second Group, so we had classes together, and I got to know him a little better. But it wasn't until two years later when we both moved to the expansion Twelfth Squadron that we really became friends and, for one semester, roommates. It had taken me about that long just to grow a little and begin feeling like I belonged there, (if anyone really did), but once again he seemed to have mastered his environment more than most of us. Nothing really bothered him much. He said it was because he grew up a Serb in Gary, IN. He was competitive enough to start from zero and become the fencing team captain and an All American, his specialty the saber. The team called him Animal, and he was. A killer instinct and cat-like reflexes. We used to double-date, and he approached his fun in the same aggressive manner as his work, which sometimes took bizarre turns. I remember leaving a movie theater a few yards in front of him and looking back to see him on the sidewalk having a mock seizure. He wasn't making fun of anyone, and he wasn't cruel, but he was tired of hearing his date tell him how to behave, so he taught her in this unique manner that he would decide for himself how he would behave. He never drank alcohol in any form, and he never again gave such a performance, but he did continue to think for himself, frequently in ways different from most of us.

He showed up at Reese (65-A) in the same old Rambler wagon he had at school. So pretty soon he's a white rocket driver by day and picking up chicks at night in the old wagon because none of the new cars really impressed him! Did an old Green Rambler impress him? I never did quite figure that one out. (We did manage to get 48 liters of booze in it on one weekend in Juarez, so on at least one occasion it impressed ME.) Most of our good friends from the Academy showed up at UPT married, and we mingled some, but most of our social life was together as bachelors. Soon after we graduated from UPT, he was impressed enough with the latest Corvette, he bought one. But we graduated WITHOUT HIM! His absence and the Corvette both came from the same trait, he loved performance. He had always been one of the top stick-and-rudder guys in the class, predictably for those of us who knew his instincts and reflexes. One night late in UPT he demonstrated the T-38's performance capabilities a little low over his girlfriend's house. [Ed: In '65B we heard he cracked all the commodes for two blocks on either side of Lubbock's main street!] We all knew his career was trashed. He became the assistant to whoever ran the O'Club, his flying days over.

I left but we stayed in touch. After realizing he was almost fully trained, the powers that be decided he would be of more use as a fighter jock than a club officer. He re-entered training, 65-E I think, and graduated higher than he was in 65-A, and got his dreamed-of F-100. So the cat lands on his feet, aggressive as ever. Somewhere in there he married his girlfriend, then went to Luke. We rejoined at Phan Rang, RVN. My F-4 squadron opened the place, and his F-100 squadron joined us not long after. We were even in adjacent hooches. I never felt like I completely understood Johnny, but I did consider him among my very best friends. I was really glad he had weathered the storm over buzzing Lubbock, and that we were stationed together. We didn't get to share war stories for long.

On 13 Sep 66, I had just finished a flight briefing and was sitting around waiting to go to the planes when someone called in and said an F-100 just went in near Qui Nhon. I asked if they knew who, and he said 'Skory or something like that'.

Next chance I got, I flew over the crash site repeatedly, noting his crash made a long scrape on the ground, I would guess well over 100 yards, maybe 2 or 3 times that. I had the distinct impression he very nearly made his pullout and may even have been aware he was not making it before his plane broke up and killed him. I am not aware of any enemy fire, but sometimes it was there anyway. He had a reputation for getting close to his work. I had the feeling a few hundred more hours on the learning curve might have mixed enough caution with his aggressiveness that we'd still have him today.

I promised myself that as soon as I got over feeling sorry for myself, I would write to his wife. I had known her before they were married. She was perfect for him. She was pregnant. Their child should be about 31 years old now. How can that be!? Maybe I'll go ahead and do it before I stop missing him. He was unique among us. I am honored to have been his friend.

Submitted 1998.