

John B. Lehrter

Class of 1964

Enshrined 2022



John B. Lehrter graduated from Xavier University in 1964. He was a member of the Pershing Rifles and Sodality, while working many hours at his father's nearby gasoline station. He received his pilot's license as the recipient of the ROTC cadet flight program his senior year. He was commissioned in the Field Artillery.

John attended the Field Artillery Basic course, then flight school to learn to fly helicopters and fixed wing aircraft, since the Aviation Branch had not yet been established. Following that training, he was sent to Vietnam and assigned to A Company, 229th Aviation (Air Assault) Battalion. It was at this time that he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. He was making a routine communication check when he received an emergency call from the leader of a Long Range Reconnaissance patrol, under attack by

a closing North Vietnamese patrol and having no infantry or artillery support. He exposed himself to extract the patrol, landing in rugged terrain and under hostile fire from the closing enemy. He successfully extracted the patrol. Upon his return to the US, he was assigned to Hunter Army Airfield for 1 year, then returned to Vietnam. In 1971, he was assigned to Fort Knox as a Basic Training Company Commander for 2 years. In 1973, he was assigned as the S-3 (Operations) in an 8th battalion in Nuremberg, Germany. In 1976, he was transferred to Stuttgart, Germany to assume command of the 48th Aviation Company, a unit of UH-1H helicopters. In 1978, he went to Fort Bragg to be trained in his alternate specialty, Military Intelligence. In 1980, he was transferred to Jackson Barracks as the Aviation Advisor to the Louisiana National Guard, and he followed that assignment as the Army Liaison to the Air Force Air Weather Services at Scott Air Force Base.

In addition to his Distinguished Flying Cross, John was awarded the Bronze Star with Oak Leaf Cluster, Purple Heart, Meritorious Service Medal with 2 Oak Leaf Clusters, Air Medal with number 34, and Army Commendation Medal with 2 Oak Leaf Clusters. These are in addition to numerous unit citations.

John retired in 1987 and assumed airport executive duties as an accredited Airport Executive at the Northwest Alabama Regional Airport, Muscle Shoals, Alabama. He remained in that position for 20 years, until his retirement in 2008.

John has been involved in community and Catholic activities. He was involved in the St. Margaret Mary Parish Council and served as Council President in 1982, while serving at Jackson Barracks. Having more available time after his military retirement, he was on the St. Joseph Parish Council, serving as its President, 1990-93. He was a member of the Shoals Chapter, Military Officers Association of America, serving as President 1990-94. He was a member of the Sheffield Kiwanis. He served as its President in 1992-93, and he was awarded the Kiwanian of the Year of the Sheffield Kiwanis in 1995-96. On top of all that, he was President of the YMCA of the Shoals in 1995-96 and 2007-09 and the Aviation Council of Alabama, 2002-04. He is currently President of the St. Vincent de Paul Thrift Store in Florence, Alabama and is Treasurer of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, St. Joseph Conference.