**James R. Mitchell**

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May 4, 1929 ~ May 4, 2015
James R. Mitchell, 86, died on May 4, 2015. He lived grudgingly side by side with multiple myeloma for 15 years until the cancer terminated the relationship. Dick was born in Ogden, Utah, the eldest child of Ralph M. and Louise Fisher Mitchell. He received primary and secondary education in Ogden, graduating from Ogden High in 1947 before attending Weber College for two years. Dick was elected student body president of his junior high and high school classes.
He served an LDS mission in California and upon returning married Helen Daines, also of Ogden. Dick and Helen later divorced. Together they had four children: Carey (Stephen) Dufner; John Richard Mitchell; Suzanne Mitchell; and Thomas Ralph Mitchell. Dick was never happier than when they were all on the ski slopes together.
Dick was an avid skier and ski racer and remained so for most of his life. He was captain of the University of Utah ski team and won the NCAA downhill title in 1953. He also won a place on the U.S. Olympic Ski Team and went to Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy in 1956.
He graduated from the University of Utah in Business Management in 1953, later returning to complete an MBA in 1967. After graduation in 1953 he entered the [U.S. Air Force](http://www.legacy.com/memorial-sites/air-force/?personid=174800608&affiliateID=832), serving his entire career as a fighter pilot in Europe and Asia, including Vietnam where he flew 149 combat sorties in an F-105 fighter bomber. During that war his plane was shot down once and disabled once due to a missile malfunction, forcing him to parachute into the jungle both times. Dick graduated first in the flying phase of his class at the Air Force Fighter Weapons (Top Gun) School at Nellis AFB in Las Vegas, Nevada. He also graduated from the USAF Air War College, the senior Air Force professional military school. During his military career Dick was awarded the Silver Star for valor in combat, two Distinguished Flying Crosses, ten Air Medals, two [Bronze Stars](http://www.legacy.com/memorial-sites/bronze-star/?personid=174800608&affiliateID=832), a Commendation Medal, a Meritorious Service Medal and a [Purple Heart](http://www.legacy.com/memorial-sites/purple-heart/?personid=174800608&affiliateID=832).
While stationed in France from 1957 to 1960, he developed a love of the French language. He continued his study of the language until 1973 when, in part due to his fluency, he was appointed Assistant Air Force Attaché in the U.S. Embassy in Saigon. When South Vietnam fell to the communists on April 27, 1975, Dick was directly involved in the evacuation of American as well as Vietnamese military personnel and civilians. He was on the last helicopter out of Tan Son Nhut Air Base at midnight on that date.
Dick retired from active duty in 1977 with the rank of Colonel and lived in the San Francisco Bay area for several years, where he became an avid off-shore yacht racer. Always competitive and ready for adventure, he raced to Hawaii three times, once sailing his own 36-foot sloop single handedly using only celestial navigation. While stationed in Ohio he bought and raced a single-seat, open-wheel racing car and won four of the six races he entered.
Returning to Utah in 1980 and moving to Park City, Dick met and married Betty Rizzo. Together they had one son, Andrew, who became the pride and joy of Dick's later life. Dick and Betty later divorced.
In Park City, Dick joined the local community theatre group where he participated as an actor in nine stage plays. He admitted to being the worst actor to ever hit town, but he had great fun. In Park City he also coached junior alpine skiers at the Canyons Resort. His longtime love affair with aviation prompted him to build his own airplane, a beautiful two-seat fast and sleek LANCAIR, which he loved to fly.
Also surviving Dick is a brother, Ralph W. (Bud) Mitchell and his wife Barrie; a sister, Mary M. Jensen and her husband Devon; and three grandchildren.
The family would like to thank the Huntsman Cancer Institute, VA Hospital, CNS Hospice and his many kind friends and neighbors who took such great care of our dad.
Friends and extended family may visit with the family on Friday, May 8, 2015 from 6:00 to 8:00 pm at Leavitt's Mortuary, 836 36th Street, Ogden, Utah.
Funeral Services will be held Saturday, May 9, 2015 at 11:00 am at Leavitt's Mortuary, 836 36th Street, Ogden, Utah. There will be a viewing prior to services starting at 9:45 to 10:45 am at Leavitt's Mortuary. Interment Leavitt's Aultorest Memorial Park, 836 36th Street, Ogden Utah where military honors will be accorded.
Please send the family condolences at: [www.leavittsmortuary.com](http://www.leavittsmortuary.com)



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