

**Yoakum, Tony M.**  
**Dates in the 57<sup>th</sup> – 68 - 69**  
**WO1 – Pilot (Cougar 19)**  
**Birth Date: November 25<sup>th</sup> 1945**  
**Vernon, TX**  
**DAT Date: March 12<sup>th</sup> 2022**  
**Vernon, TX**



**Tony M. Yoakum**  
**Military rank: WO1**

Status: Life Member

Good Address? Yes  
Good Email? Yes  
Good Phone? Yes

2508 Tolar St.  
Vernon, TX 76384

Home Phone: 940-552  
Work Phone: 940-839

Email: [tmortyoak@](mailto:tmortyoak@)

Occupation: Retired

**Flight Class(es):**  
**67-19, 67-17**

CallSign(s):

**COUGAR 19, BUSHWACKER 34 , COBRA 34**

Unit(s):

**57 AHC (68-69)**

**175 AHC (71)**

**114 AHC (71)**

Branch of Service:

**AR**

<https://www.lunnscolonial.com/obituary/tony-yoakum>



Tony M. Yoakum

November 25, 1945 - March 12, 2022

U.S. Veteran

Saddling up for his last earthly journey, Tony M. Yoakum rode to meet his Lord and Savior on March 12, 2022. A man with a quiet, deep faith, Tony accepted Jesus Christ as his Savior at an early age. He depended on the Lord for guidance and safekeeping through the perils of war until his last breath.

Tony was born to Paulina C. and Dan W. Yoakum on November 25, 1945, in Vernon, Texas. He was blessed by a remarkable grandmother, Vina Townson. Her influence combined with that of uncles John and George Townson formed a fierce determination and strong work ethic that bore fruit throughout his life. Tony graduated from Vernon High School in 1964 and attended Hardin-Simmons University and Midwestern State University before enlisting in the U. S. Army in 1966. It was there that he fulfilled his dream of becoming a pilot. A highly decorated war hero, Tony served two tours as a combat helicopter pilot in Viet Nam and a Flight Evaluation Instructor at Fort Wolters, Texas, during his enlistment. In 1974, Tony was hired as temporary Christmas help by the U S. Post Office. This developed into a 40-year career that culminated with seventeen years as Postmaster, Vernon, Texas.

Tony was determined (some might say stubborn), creative and an inspiration to many. As a mentor, teacher, coach, and encourager his influence will live on in many lives.

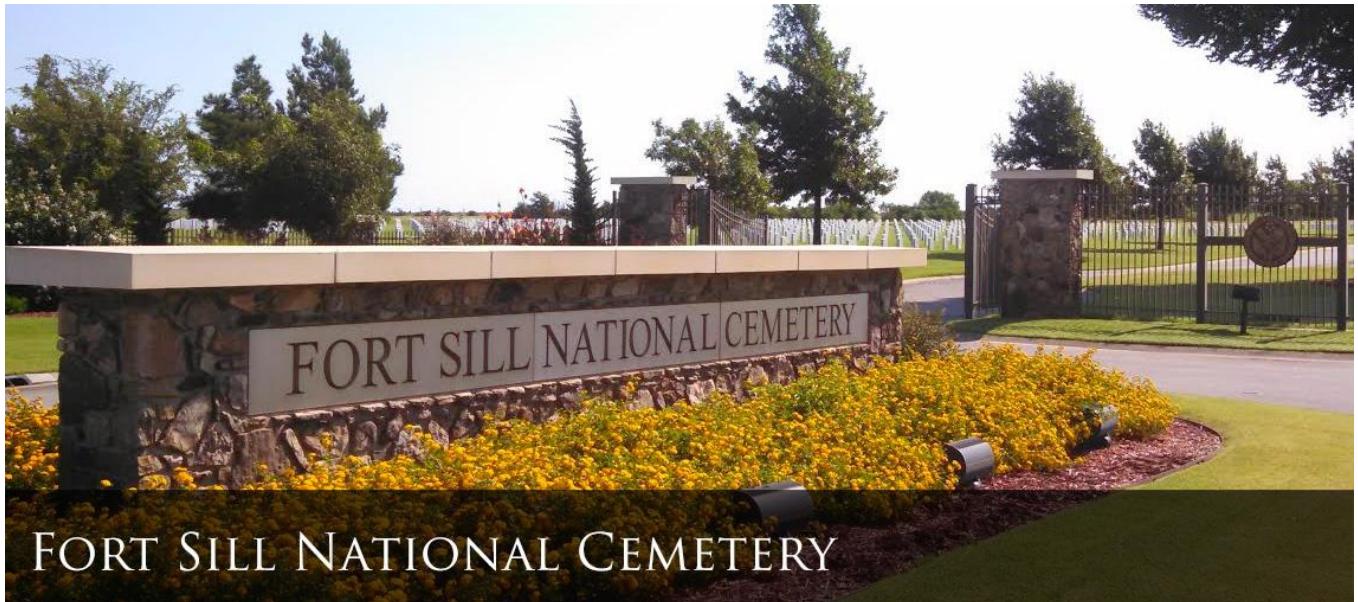
Tony was preceded in death by his parents.

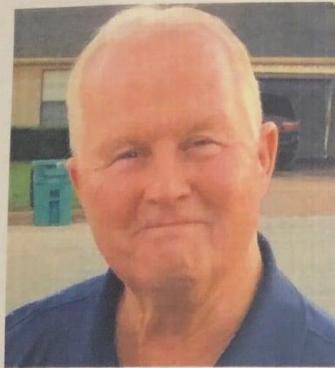
Those left to cherish his memory are his wife Sherry Yoakum of the home, son Kelly Mort Yoakum (Wendy) of Moran, Wyoming, Willard Daniel Yoakum (Jodi) and granddaughter Jentry of Cheyenne, Oklahoma and daughter Carrie Mae Yoakum-Biggs (Casey) and grandson Leighton Baker of Wichita Falls, Texas. Brothers-in- law Butch Shoop (Deb) of Sherman, Texas, David Shoop (Pam) and sister-in-law Julia White of Wichita Falls, Texas; along with a host of much-loved cousins.

Graveside services with Military Honors will be held at Fort Sill National Cemetery, Thursday, March 17, 2022, at 11:00 AM with Ric Rosalez, Pastor Second Baptist Church, Vernon, Texas officiating. Family visitation will be Wednesday, March 16, 2022 from 6-7 PM at Lunn's Colonial Funeral Home, Wichita Falls, Texas.

For those desiring, memorial contributions may be sent to the Red River Valley Museum, PO Box 2004, Vernon, Texas 76385.

<https://cityofelginok.com/stay-and-play/fort-sill-national-cemetery/>





In Memory Of  
Tony M. Yoakum

Date of Birth  
November 25, 1945

Date of Death  
March 12, 2022

Date of Service  
11:00 AM  
Thursday  
March 17, 2022

Place of Service  
Fort Sill National Cemetery  
(Elgin, Oklahoma)

Minister  
Pastor Ric Rosalez

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is thy keeper: the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.

Psalm 121

I received the following from Steve Sullivan and with his permission have reposted it here.

March 27, 2022

Attached is a 1968 picture of Tony Yoakum. Also included are pictures taken in 2017 at Tony's barn Vernon, Texas. (Tony's "barn" included stables, bunk house, and roping arena). Tony restored an Army jeep adding the 57<sup>th</sup> identification. The jeep was parked in a Conex container because of an insurance requirement for a high value vehicle.

In the 1968 picture shows the two mounted M60 machine guns with flexible ammo feeder trays, instead of the usual mini guns, and a radio antenna with a handset near Tony.

During the January 10<sup>th</sup> sapper attack we lost at least two gunships. Another assault helicopter company was levied to give us a gunship. Naturally they handed over their very "best" helicopter, a UH-1 (I think it was a B model) with quad 60's that were predecessors to mini guns (4 M60 machine guns, 2 per side, plus rockets).

The 1968 picture also shows a handset and antennae next to Tony. The radio was given to us by FOB 2 as we stood by to be dispatched on an FOB mission to Laos or Cambodia. The 57th provided gunships and slicks to support FOB 2. Because of the need to make a running take off with a loaded gun ship, the guns remained on standby at Kon Tum airstrip rather than at the FOB 2 compound, while waiting for a radio call to launch. As a new guy, Tony, was given the duty to monitor the radio rather than join the rest of us catching up on sleep.

Tony still has a partially shaved head with the noticeable scar as result of a bullet wound suffered during Tet. (Tony was warned by fellow Texan, Bob Thompson, to knock off the John Wayne stuff, but it took an NVA bullet to get his attention). The NVA shooter may have been the same guy who wounded Bill Little and First Sgt.

Whitney,,,,,but I digress. Well,,, to digress a little further, Tony is wearing his Cougar patch seen partially hidden behind his chicken plate. It is interesting that as a Foxtrot November Golf, Tony seemed to get all the patches, badges, medals and scars while he still had new clean jungle fatigues. Upon arriving at the 57<sup>th</sup> in Kon Tum, Tony somehow immediately "acquired" a 45 caliber M3 "grease gun", when many of us were lucky to get a vintage pre-WWII 45 pistol.

During Tony's first tour he wangled an in-country Cobra transition at Vung Tau. After completing the transition, he was reassigned to the 361st Pink Panther Cobras at Plei Ku. After a short time with the 361st Tony went to the Battalion Commander and told him he wanted to return to the 57th in Kon Tum. Tony related how he had told the Battalion Commander that he did not like the way the 361st operated. I do not know all the details of the conversation, but I can imagine it was interesting. Shortly after this "discussion" Tony returned to Kon Tum and resumed flying for the Cougars.

The 57th had originally been a Caribou Airplane Company in the early days of the war. During our tour, we sometimes received supply items that had been requisitioned several years before by the Caribou Company. Two brand new Hasselblad cameras (a Hasselblad camera was an expensive high-end Swedish made camera) requisitioned by the 57th Caribou Company, arrived in Kon Tum. Tony promptly talked the 57th Commander out of one of the cameras. This may explain why Tony has a lot of really good RVN photos.

Once, while we were on standby for FOB-2, I walked in to the headquarters tent to see the Commander, Major Bill Gess. Tony was sitting at a clerk's desk furiously typing reports. As his erstwhile platoon leader, I had to ask "what the hell was he doing". It turned out that Tony could type faster and better than any of our clerks, so he was helping out by typing and clearing out the back log of paperwork.

The 57<sup>th</sup> was the recipient of numerous 122 mm rockets fired at us by the NVA. Generally, when there were incoming rockets, which we could hear for several terrifying seconds, everyone dove for cover. Tony sometimes would run out and start up a helicopter during a rocket attack. I told him that if he wanted to go home in one piece he should hunker down until the rockets stopped and it was safe to run to a helicopter and launch in an effort to catch the NVA rocket teams. Not long after our "discussion" we received several incoming rockets, one of which landed in the area where the gunships were parked. As the dust settled, I noticed Tony had mud all over his face and the front of his jungle fatigues. Tony had been running to the gunships and as a rocket approached, he dove to the ground. The rocket impacted just a short distance ahead of Tony.

Tony kept a diary. It was big thick book that he seemed to write in every day. During the following years Tony has looked through his diary to answer a question about a day or event during his time in Kon Tum. (When Paul Stevens passed away, I asked Tony where and when Paul had earned his purple heart, so Tony looked through his diary and found an entry about Paul being shot down in Laos, an event that we had both totally forgotten.) Not long-ago Tony called and said that he had found an entry noting that I had raised hell with him about the use of flechette rockets. He asked me if I remembered this encounter some 50 plus years ago and although I had no idea what he was talking about, I said that I was chewing him out about missing a target and wasting rockets. My off the cuff comment about his lack of prowess with rockets was not well received.

Tony was awarded two Distinguished Flying Crosses and two Purple Hearts. Tony told me that his second purple heart was awarded during his second tour flying a Cobra when a bullet hit the Cobra torque gauge and the torque needle flew out of the gauge and stuck in his neck.

Over the years several Viet Nam vets have searched for and sought out Tony because they wanted to thank him for his "determined" efforts to give them gun cover. One person who called and had a long talk with Tony had been an FOB Lt. who was in deep shit over in the area of H-9 (Hotel 9 was a particularly well defended area on the Ho Chi Min Road) in Laos. (The Lt. was on what is now referred to as a MACV-SOG mission.) Another group located Tony and drove to Texas to thank him for saving them during his second tour, when he hovered near or over a downed helicopter with his Cobra and rotated 360 degrees while firing to keep the enemy at bay.

Tony got pretty wrapped up in the FOB mission and decided not to leave RVN when he was supposed to. He just did not bother to leave and kept flying missions. Darrell

Anthony reminded me that Ft. Wolters, Texas reported him as AWOL because he did not show up for duty as an instructor pilot. I guess it did not occur to anyone that Tony, being Tony, might have just decided to stay in Viet Nam and keep flying gunships. I understand that the 57<sup>th</sup> Commander at that time, Major Bob Williams, got in a bit of trouble about Tony's failure to depart Viet Nam when he was supposed to.

Upon hearing of Tony's passing Bill Quinn said it best "Tony was a warrior".

MAY YOUR ROTOR ALWAYS STAY IN THE GREEN COUGAR 19, RIP

Steve Sullivan



