



## SMSgt Don Delucchi

*By Col William E. Ignatow (Ret)*

On October 9, 2005, the Guard Family said goodbye to one of its most supportive members. SMSgt Don Delucchi (Ret) fought a long, hard battle with cancer, never losing his spirit, despite many setbacks. He leaves his wife Marg, son Larry, and daughter Donna.

I first met Don in the spring of 1972. I was a traditional Guardsman and Don was the Training Technician at the 129<sup>th</sup>. It turned out that we shared a common interest in duck hunting. That fall we went on our first duck hunt together at his Father-in-law's "private club" in Los Banos. While I was truly honored and excited about the prospects of hunting on a private club, I was also nervous. Always having been a "refuge duck hunter", this amounted to taking

the blue collar beer drinker to the stock broker's private club for lunch. Although we only shot one duck and that day, and the private club could be more adequately described as a flooded cow field with a shack on it, this first hunt spawned a friendship that would find Don and me in a duck blind together, each weekend, all winter, for the next 32 years. Don loved to hunt, whether it was ducks, doves, or pheasants. Whenever I would call to ask if he was interested, all he wanted to know was where we would meet.

Over the years, Don and I had many disagreements, but none when we were hunting. They were mostly about my inability to properly maintain AF Form 623s on the Airmen that I was responsible for (this of course was "Properly - According to Delucchi"....) All those who were in the 129<sup>th</sup> back then know what I mean. Trying to explain to Don that I was confident that those Airmen had the requisite skills necessary to perform certain tasks meant nothing if I couldn't show that it was clearly documented in the AF 623. My argument that I was too busy training to have to stop and write it all down never did go over very well, and anyone who ever got into a loud conversation with Don would quickly realize they were woefully out-gunned (but back then, I was dumb enough to try....).

Then there were the dogs. Don's love, next to his wonderful wife Marg, was his dogs - Mingo, Duke and Rose. We hunted with all of them over the years. They were wonderful hunting dogs. Wonderful hunting dogs, to those that don't know, means they are great hunters in the field, but at home are just a little more obnoxious than the sounds your not so favorite Uncle makes when he falls asleep in the easy chair after Thanksgiving dinner. But you still find some way to love them, even when their feed bill exceeds your whole family's in the middle of the summer. I gave Don his current dog, Rose, who was with Don at the end, and I'm sure is being a comfort to Marg now. I don't know how many pictures Marg has sent me over the years of Rose curled up in Don's lap, both sound asleep.

Don was sometimes critical of how the Guard was being run, as we all are from time to time. But Don never let his critical views get in the way of his passion for staying involved with the 129<sup>th</sup>. The positions he has had over the years with the AHA were time consuming and at times frustrating, but Don always believed that the best way to make things better was not to talk about it, but to get involved and do something. Don was a doer.

Not a week goes by where I don't catch myself half way through the telephone dialing sequence, calling my friend Don. It's winter now and it just doesn't feel right, not sitting in a duck blind next to my friend. Don and I shared a lot of stories and secrets over the years, and we were good about not ever revealing these to others. But as I finish this, I will let one out. I know my friend, that even in Heaven, you still can't hit a dove flying from right to left. We have said goodbye to a wonderful husband, father, grandfather, and friend.