Robert LaPointe Google Bio

Robert L. LaPointe, SMSgt, USAF-retired, a combat veteran of Vietnam and Desert Storm, commenced his military service in 1969. He began training to gain his Pararescue qualifications immediately after basic training. Upon completing this rigorous training, he soon found himself assigned to the 37th ARRS, DaNang AB, RVN. During two tours in Vietnam, he flew more than four hundred combat hours as an HH-53 "Jolly Green Giant" helicopter crewmember and performed combat rescue duties that resulted in the saving of over 100 lives. Sergeant LaPointe remained in Pararescue until his retirement in 1995. During his career he supported NASA's Apollo, Skylab and space shuttle programs. NASA astronaut rescue training often required that he parachute into the North Atlantic at night, in the winter. For numerous space shuttle launches he was the senior Pararescue team leader at the trans-Atlantic abort sites in Europe and Africa. SMSgt LaPointe is an expert mountaineer who in 1977 led the first USAF team to climb to the summit of North America's tallest peak, Mt. McKinley. He subsequently led other successful expedition on McKinley in 1978. Sergeant LaPointe conceptualized, created and led the at the USAF Pararescue School combat operations phase. He was the NCOIC of the USAF military Accelerated Freefall (AFF) course which transitioned the entire career field in one year to ram air freefall qualified. He was assigned to the 71st Air Rescue Squadron at Elmendorf AFB, AK in 1975. While assigned to Alaska, Sgt LaPointe participated in dozens of rescue missions that included two parachute jump missions and over 100 helicopter rescue missions that resulted in close to 200 lives saved.

These hazardous missions resulted in several injuries that include a fractured neck, compression of over a third of his spinal processes, fractures of his lumbar spine, bilateral injuries of ankles and knees, and other injuries too numerous to list here. He is now rated as a 100% service connected disabled veteran by the Department of Veterans Affairs. Sergeant LaPointe jokes that he just has the normal assortment of injuries relate to duties as a Pararescueman.

Military courses he graduated include: U.S. Army Airborne, Military Freefall Parachutist, Jumpmaster, Special Forces SCUBA, Ranger Mountain, USMC Basic Combat Skills, USAF Pararescue, Pararescue Advanced Casualty Care, Pararescue Advanced Combat Skills, Pararescue Boat Master, Flight and Ground Instructor, Pararescue Flight Evaluator, Basic Survival, Arctic Survival, Jungle Survival, and Pararescue Team Leader. Sergeant LaPointe has flown as a crewmember on the following aircraft: HH-43, HH-3, HH-53, HH-60 and HC-130. He accumulated 2,494 flight hours and slightly over 1,600 military parachute jumps.

He has been assigned to both conventional rescue and special operations PJ teams. He was the Commander of Det 2, 1730 Pararescue Squadron, Osan Air Base Korea for over two years. Served as the Superintendent of Det.2, 1723 Special Tactics Squadron, Clark Air Base Philippines. Was also a Pararescue Staff NCO at HQ ARRS and HQ 23 AF. His decorations include

two Distinguished Flying Crosses, five Meritorious Service Medals, twelve Air Medals, an Aerial Achievement Medal, five Air Force Commendation Medals, five Air Force Achievement Medals, two Air Force Presidential Unit Citations, five Air Force Outstanding Unit Citation with V, an Air Force Combat Readiness Medal, eight Air Force Good Conduct Medals, the Outstanding Airman of the Year Ribbon with 1 star, the National Defense Service Medal with 1 star, the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal with 1 star, Vietnam Service Medal with 4 stars, the Southwest Asia Service Medal with 1 star, an Humanitarian Service Medal, the Air Force Overseas Short Tour Ribbon with 7 oak leaf clusters, an Air Force Overseas Long Tour Ribbon, the Air Force Longevity Service Award with 4 oak leaf clusters, the AF NCO PME Graduate Ribbon with 2 oak leaf clusters, the Air Force Small Arms Expert Marksman w star, an Air Force Training Ribbon, the Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with palm, a Vietnam Campaign Medal, and the Vietnamese Presidential Unit Citation.

Sergeant LaPointe retired from the USAF in 1995 after 26 years' service in Pararescue. Between 1995 and 1999 he flew as a commercial pilot and attended the University of Alaska where he majored in history. In 1999, he began working for the State of Alaska Division of Emergency Services, which was renamed in 2001 Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Services. During this period, he developed emergency response plans and was the State Emergency Response Commission coordinator. Because of his multiple orthopedic injuries, and on the advice of doctors, he relocated from the arctic to a warmer climate. In 2002 Robert moved to the Philippines where he resided for 20 years near the former Clark Air Base. In 2006 he was married to the former Wendie G. Malaki. They have two children Deborah and Samantha. In 2026, he was 76 years old and his children are 17 and 12 years old. This unconventional age of parent verses children is similar with his non-traditional military career.

Robert is considered to be one of the most authoritative experts on Vietnam War Search and Rescue (SAR). He wrote two books about SAR in that conflict. They are "PJs in Vietnam" and "All for One." He created the Vietnam War SAR database that lists 3041 rescue missions flown during that conflict. Data includes who flew on the rescue aircraft, who they rescued, date and location of the SAR. He created and maintains the PJ Association Digital Historical Archive. It consists of 299GB, 171,000 files that covers Pararescue history from the 1940's to present day.

In 2022, he moved his family to the United States and now resides in Crestview, Florida. In 2022 he became the historian for the USAF Pararescue Association. In 2024 he created the Pararescue history website located at https://pjhistory.org/ and continues to act as it's developer and administrator.