

Colonel James. K. Ehni distinguished himself by outstanding service to the United States of America, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the Pennsylvania Air National Guard during a career of service that spanned nearly 33 years.

Born 9 February 1939, in Belleview, Pennsylvania, Colonel Ehni began his military career in May 1960, as a Navigator Trainee at Harlingen AFB, Texas. He graduated in March 1961, receiving his commission and navigator's wings. Second Lieutenant Ehni went to the Electronic Warfare Officer Course at Keesler AFB, Mississippi.

After four years of active duty in the Air Force, Lieutenant Ehni returned to the Pittsburgh area where he attended the University of Pittsburgh. In December 1965, First Lieutenant Ehni joined the 147 Military Airlift Squadron in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The young lieutenant quickly proved himself a valuable asset to the unit and made rapid advancements in responsibilities and rank. Colonel Ehni served in the 171 Air Refueling Wing in many capacities. He was the Deputy Commander of Support as well as the Deputy Commander of operations during his tenure. He was later assigned as the Chief of Wing Safety.

Colonel Ehni took all assignments to heart, becoming an expert on every task assigned. He managed base construction projects and closely monitored environmental issues. Colonel Ehni was also directly responsible for establishing and directing the unit's fuel conservation program. When the two Air Guard flying units at Pittsburgh merged, Colonel Ehni studied the downsizing issues and provided constructive advice and guidance. He was a prime member of the Wing Battle Staff. He voluntarily coordinated the functions of the special staff offices, such as, Chaplain, Historian, Public Affairs, and Legal Services.

Throughout his tenure, Colonel Ehni provided outstanding leadership and superb management. He took the core values of military service seriously and incorporated them into his daily life. Among his numerous awards, Colonel Ehni received the Air Force Meritorious Service and Commendation Medals, four Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards with Valor and two Air Defense Reserve Medals. These are only a few of Colonel Ehni's decorations. More importantly, he was a devoted husband, father, and grandfather, as well as an esteemed leader in his military and civilian lives. Colonel Ehni was actively involved in his church, where he held the office of treasurer for ten years. He was also a Cub Master for several years in his community.

Colonel Ehni retired from the Pennsylvania Air National Guard in 1994. Sadly, in September 1995, less than a year after he retired, Colonel Ehni died. Colonel Ehni left behind a legacy as an exemplar of the finest attributes of military and community service.

The singularly distinctive accomplishments of Colonel James K. Ehni in a lifetime of service reflect great credit upon himself, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the Pennsylvania Air National Guard and warrant his induction into the Pennsylvania Air National Guard Hall of Fame.