

## Local humanitarian John Grove dies

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FORT WALTON BEACH - For more than two decades, retired Air Force Maj. John Grove worked tirelessly on humanitarian missions, including delivering food and medical supplies to Southeast Asian countries and helping to set up a fresh-water system in a Thai village.

Grove, described by longtime friends as a "humanitarian hero," died this week at his home in Fort Walton Beach at the age of 66. An autopsy is pending, but the cause of death is believed to be heart failure.

Dave Freeman, a retired Air Force helicopter pilot, said he and Grove belonged to the same squadron and worked on various aid projects in recent years.

Grove flew special ops in Thailand during the Vietnam War, where he received a Distinguished Flying Cross, "and the Air Commandos recognized the need to help people in the different countries (in Southeast Asia)," Freeman said.

The McCoskrie/Threshold Foundation, the nonprofit, humanitarian branch of the Air Commando Association, was born out of that need. Grove served most recently as its vice president.

Freeman said Grove was an environmentalist as well as a humanitarian. He said Grove "loved the environmental aspect of what he did. He was saving all of that stuff from just going to waste."

Lon Lancaster, a longtime friend who also worked with Grove on foundation projects, described him as "the humanitarian hero in the local area."

"I suspect that many in the local area would say that John Grove was one of (if not the) most prolific humanitarian workers in the Fort Walton Beach area for the past 20 years," Lancaster wrote in an e-mail.

Starting in the mid-1980s, Grove worked to improve the lives of others and of future generations.

The projects included helping to ship hundreds of donated school desks, dental equipment and clothing from the United States to countries such as Honduras, Guatemala, Vietnam and Laos.

Most recently, he solicited donations of electric stoves, refrigerators, washers and other items to give to orphanages in Honduras as part of the foundation's 16th annual Christmas Wish program.

The Fort Walton Beach resident also coordinated charitable efforts closer to home. He delivered donated baked goods, medical supplies and other items to nursing homes and community organizations.

"He was just a great member of the community," Freeman said. "He went to Krispy Kreme in Destin and they would give him all the doughnuts they weren't going to sell, so he always had doughnuts and gave them out wherever he went."

Grove is survived by his mother, three brothers and two children. He will be buried at Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia.