



Commander Franklin on his retirement day, July 1, 1996, walking through a group of four honorary "side boys" with his mother at the Pentagon.

**R**emember the days in the 1990's when men and women in the military were publicly coming out of the closet in droves ... people such as Joseph Steffan and Margarethe Cammermeyer, among many others?

And after many of them started coming out of the closet, they promptly came out of the military – most due simply to their admission that they were gay. By doing so, many of them made national headlines.

Well, I was there. Right in the middle of it. Except I never came out of the closet. And I didn't come out of the military until I retired.

Admittedly, my retirement was a year earlier than the normal 20 years – an early "out" when Congress was downsizing the military – but I retired officially, with Mom on my arm, walking through a row of saluting officers and a proper reception to follow.

With a few differences. My lover was also there. But as just a "friend." Several gay acquaintances were there. More "friends." One of my best straight friends from past Navy years gave a glowing eulogy to my contributions to the

# Living in the Shadows of Heroes

**Should I have come out?**

**Did I compromise my values?**

**Could I have made a difference?**

**by Chuck Franklin**