

## Military Service

In 1954 the Korean War was winding down, and most of my friends got drafted or joined the Navy. I applied for U.S. aviation cadets program and passed the test, but was told I could not get in a class for 2 years.

In January 1955 I was at a girl friend's house when I heard a friend of her younger brother say that he could get pilot training through the Air National Guard. I had never heard of that program. I only talked to him for 15-20 minutes and never saw him again before or after that occasion. (God sent a messenger). I never knew his name, but that conversation changed my life forever by helping me become a pilot instead of a farmer. I checked it out and joined the Wichita Air National Guard for pilot training in July 1955. About 13 years later, President George W. Bush went through the same pilot training that I had but with different aircraft.

It was a new program to replace old pilots from WWII. I was number 3 from the State of Kansas for this program. It was the most difficult two years of my life. It started with Preflight at San Antonio for four months, then 6 months at Moultrie, Georgia for Primary flight training and Solo in two different aircrafts, then spent 6 months at Del Rio, Texas to check out in Jets T-33. There I saw 4 aircraft accidents that killed 2 pilots and broke the back of another pilot. Summer time was very hot there, 100F +. The barracks had water (swamp cooler) and very cold air conditioning, and I had to sleep under 2 blankets. At Del Rio I received my Air Force wings and was commissioned as a Second Lt. and was sent to gunnery school at Phoenix, AZ.

Upon arriving at Phoenix three of us were going to rent a duplex. One officer who I did not know was drunk and with a prostitute, and he told us to leave and shot a hole in the ceiling as we were leaving. I and a good friend told our commander about the incident, and the drunk was never around after that. What a waste of money and training! I spent five months in Phoenix, AZ for jet fighter, gunnery school, and rocket and bomb training. I was flying a 4 ship in trail formation to

the gunnery aerial range. I had a jet aircraft pass head-on under the first 3 air planes and above me. I estimated a closure rate of 750-800 miles per hour. There was no time to react. God was looking after me again.

When flying the F86 my roommate and I had the same mission. I flew it in the morning, and he flew it in the afternoon. My roommate had an accident and didn't come home. His death was very hard on me as he was the person you wanted around you all the time. I still think of him.

End of training, I returned to the Air National Guard at Wichita. I had weekend-drills and 3 other days a month to fly, which amounted to one day a week of flying time, plus 2 weeks of summer camp. My unit changed aircrafts, and I flew high altitude photo recon in the B57 twin engine jet. I moved to Kansas City to find employment and worked 5 years in Air Traffic Control. I was transferred to the St. Joe, Missouri Air National Guard to fly single engine RF84 in photo recon, and then to C97 four engine air transport aircraft. I spent total time of 2 years of active duty and 8 years in the reserve for about 10 years of service. My final rank was a Captain in the Air Force.

American Airlines hired me as a pilot in 1965. In 1970 on a flight from Detroit to Chicago, we had a bad scare. A violent downdraft of vacuum hit our plane and we fell 4000 feet in 28 seconds from 14,000 to 10,000 and zero airspeed for 28 seconds. We went from the speed of 0 to 356 knots in one second. We had 1-1/2 neg G's and 3 positive G forces. We lost all electricity on the plane and the radar was useless in detecting storms when you were in weather. The flight attendant told the cockpit that most passengers were injured from flying debris in the cabin, and one young girl had a broken neck. Chicago was notified to have medical teams for our arrival. With a crew of seven and ninety-two passengers, ninety-nine people were on board and survived to enjoy life again. No other aircraft ever survived going through the center of a tornado. By the grace of God we did not crash and kill everybody. God was speaking to everybody. Years later I learned that the company had the Captain who was at the controls of the aircraft hypnotized twice to see if he did anything unusual to save the plane. He

was very well thought of as a gentleman and a captain. Two of his sons now are airline captains. When he retired he moved to Fairview, Texas and I could not find it on the map. Now I know.

I retired from American Airlines in 1992, having flown for them for 27-1/2 years as a Captain.

My total years of flying were 37 1/2, and my total flight time was 20,400+ hours. (military and airline)

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