

HONTO! The Unofficial History of the USAF Security Service at Misawa, Japan chronicles the early history of the 301st Intelligence Squadron currently serving in Northern Japan. The men and women who blazed the trail for that unit tell their stories.

HONTO!

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HONTO!

**The *Unofficial* History of the USAF
Security Service at Misawa, Japan**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter One: WHY <i>DID</i> I JOIN THE AIR FORCE?.....	1
Chapter Two: BASIC TRAINING AND TECH SCHOOL.....	53
Chapter Three: GETTING THERE.....	106
Chapter Four: THE LINGO.....	132
Chapter Five: THE PIONEERS	151
Chapter Six: THE HILL	212
Chapter Seven: MAIN BASE.....	242
Chapter Eight: THE MACHI.....	263
Chapter Nine: AND MY FAVORITE BAR WAS.....	330
Chapter Ten: TREATING MEN LIKE BOYS.....	350
Chapter Eleven: THE JOB	366
Chapter Twelve: MAJOR BENNIES	440
Chapter Thirteen: JEEP JOKES	453
Chapter Fourteen: THE ENLISTED MAN'S COMMAND	481
Chapter Fifteen: OFFICERS—THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY	500
Chapter Sixteen: HERE COME THE WOMEN!.....	547
Chapter Seventeen: I FEEL THE EARTH MOVE UNDER MY FEET.....	566
Chapter Eighteen: SNOW!.....	594
Chapter Nineteen: THE GREAT FIRE OF 1966	615
Chapter Twenty: CHOWIN' DOWN!.....	631
Chapter Twenty-one: OPERATION EYESIGHT	658
Chapter Twenty-two: THE PERSONALITIES.....	668

Chapter One

WHY DID I JOIN THE AIR FORCE?

OVERVIEW: As we move forward to the time when the history of Misawa *must* be written, I thought it would be of interest to know just what motivated men and women of different time periods to enlist in the Air Force. And, why the Air Force and not another branch? Did you enlist straight out of school, or did you work for a while? Were you single or married, and what economic features may have looked good? Was it a good decision or bad? Tell us about it.

Helen Johns Henderson
St. Augustine, Florida



The 1950s

Back in 1957, there weren't many jobs to be had in my hometown, and therefore, a couple of my friends and I were looking for work.

We found ourselves in Augusta, Georgia, walking next to the post office, and dropped in to see what the recruiters had to say. Well, the only one in was the Air Force Recruiter and within three days we were on our way to Lackland.

I had to get my release from the Navy Reserve, and was discharged *after* I had been sworn into the Air Force. I had one summer with the Navy and found there was no beer or females on those ships, so the Air Force sounded like a better way to go.

At the end of my first enlistment, I was at Misawa and thinking of getting out and going to college when a friend of mine from Korea called and wanted to get together in Tokyo. He was stationed at Itazuke at the time. I needed money for that, so I reenlisted and the rest is history.

Bill Doolittle
Edgefield, South Carolina

I graduated from high school in 1958 and went to work at a department store in Hartford, Connecticut about 14 miles from home. After around six months, my boss realized I was very immature and naive and suggested I join the service.

I picked the Air Force because of the opportunity to learn something different. I went to see the recruiter, took all the tests, and decided I wanted to be a clerk typist. I became a Morse operator instead...needs of the Air Force, you know. It was the best thing that ever happened to me.

I wound up with a 34-year career between eight years in the Air Force and 26 years at NSA.

Dick Baumgartel
Bradenton, Florida

Upon graduating high school in 1957, I entered North Texas State Teachers College that fall. I was too busy working, playing in dance bands, drinking beer, and chasing women to do much college work. After a failed first semester, I decided my life needed some direction and thought the Air Force was the way to get it. After four years and nine months, I was ready to return to school and get on with my life.

I will always be grateful for my time in the USAF Security Service.

Ben Whitten
Whitefish, Montana

In 1957, I did not want to continue life on the dairy farm milking 125 cows twice a day. I was very adept at fixing things such as engines, mowers, etc. and thought it would be good to get in on the ground floor of fixing jet engines for the coming

commercial aviation world and complete my military obligation at the same time.

So two days after graduation from high school, I went to the Air Force recruiter and told him my tale. Following the AFQT where I only missed two questions, and a physical, my recruiter told me I was a lock for A&E [sic] School, but no promises. I got my mom to sign the papers and off I went to Lackland.

Eventually we went to the Green Monster where they told me that, because of my color deficiency in eyesight, A&E school was out. I immediately thought they would put me in AP School because I could shoot, or I would be driving a wheel barrow for some agricultural purpose. He asked me if I took a language in high school and I said yes. He never asked how well I had done.

The truth be told, at the end of my second year of French, my teacher called me forward at the end of the year and told me that if I promise never to take French again, she would pass me. I did, she did, and I had a C minus. True to Air Force ways, they tested me and told me I could learn a foreign language.

I arrived at Syracuse for Russian training, thence to Misawa where I worked as a Day Lady in 21st RGM. Having completed Russian training, I was convinced that I was probably not such a farm hick and thought about college.

I put in my two years at Misawa and went home with a new understanding of who I was and what the world was about. I matured so much during my tenure at Misawa; I returned home and was amazed at how much my father had learned in the years I was in the Air Force.

I then set about becoming an engineer to design and manufacture jet engines. I worked for Pratt & Whitney for 35 years and was finally able to work on the engines I wanted to fix when I left the farm.

I look back on the time I made the decision to enter the Air Force and have always been of the conviction that it was an experience I did not want to miss but might never do it twice. I thank God for the career men and women that do.

John Gilbert
Storrs, Connecticut

I was also a 1957 high school graduate. Several months before graduation, I learned I'd made the Civil Air Patrol (CAP) exchange cadet program, and had the chance to visit Israel for the month of August that year. I had no idea in 1957 where the hell Israel was. I had to look it up on the map. I wasn't going to give up that trip, but the question was what to do *after* the trip.

There were jobs around my hometown in Northern Indiana, but I'd seen too many trap themselves into living their entire lives there.

My folks didn't have the money to send me to college (I had hoped to attend Purdue), and the draft was still in effect back then. Being single and not in school, I knew I'd wind up a ground pounder before long.

Those in the know advised me that the best schooling was available through either the Navy or Air Force. Since the Air Force would award me my first stripe upon enlistment (because of my CAP experience), and since I had no wish to spend my time cramped up on an iron tub with a bunch of other sweaty guys, I enlisted in the Air Force in early October of 1957.

I reasoned that enlisting would accomplish the following:

- 1) It satisfied my military obligation,
 - 2) It might provide me the education I couldn't afford to buy,
 - 3) It promised an opportunity to see new parts of the world,
- and
- 4) It got me the hell out of town and away from a girlfriend who wanted to get married, buy the house just down the road from her parents' farm, and raise a swarm of kids!

My decision to join wasn't motivated by patriotism for my country—it just seemed my best alternative at the time. In retrospect, I've never regretted having joined the Air Force, and I'm sure I'd make the same decision again. I learned during my first hitch that a career as an enlisted man was not for me, but when my four years ended while in Japan, I knew I wasn't ready to go home.

So, I re-up'd for another four years, and looking back, I'd probably not repeat that action. Given another chance, I'd probably just extend for a year or two to stay in Japan, then go home for discharge.

I will always be grateful for what the Air Force taught or gave me:

1) The skills and confidence to take care of myself and to act independently.

2) A broad exposure, up close and personal, to a wide variety of cultures, and the realization that they were just people, pretty much like me.

3) Schooling that taught me how to learn—something most schools never teach you.

4) The opportunity to work with a large team of talented professionals, and the chance to contribute and experience the feeling of self-worth.

5) The environment and incentive to think independently.

6) A comprehension of the price of freedom, and an honest respect for those who serve in uniform—past, present, and future.

I have long thought that this country, and our youngsters in particular, would be far better off if they would all (with precious few exceptions) serve a minimum of two years in the Armed Forces immediately upon graduation from high school. As we did then, they would be exposed to lessons they would never learn in a classroom.

Thomas “Dutch” Wiest
San Ramon, California

I am a 1957 high school graduate also.

My dad had earned a living the hard way, in the factories of Detroit. He had assisted my two brothers-in-law in getting employed with Chrysler, and it was expected that Jim would follow that route.

But factory work was not on my dream sheet. I had itchy feet. I make no secret of my enjoyment of seeing new places. I lived fairly close to a small Air Force Base, and just picked them.

I graduated from high school on a Tuesday, and the following Friday I was at Lackland. My best fortune, however, was to be selected to attend 202 School and being assigned to the USAF Security Service. I stayed 22 years, and never regretted that decision.

Jim Kaus
Panama City, Florida

In 1955, between my junior and senior year in high school, my brother, who was in the Air National Guard (ANG) at the time, talked me into joining. I spent 18 months in the ANG.

I finally got tired of waiting for them to send me to a technical school, so I talked to the Air Force recruiter and decided to enlist. Since I had completed all the requirements for Basic Training in the ANG, they sent me to Lackland and into a re-enlistee flight.

I was selected for Radio School at Keesler and then went on to Misawa. After leaving Security Service, I cross-trained into admin and spent 22 years with assignments around the world and throughout the United States.

I never regretted a minute of my career and the tour at Missy was one of the most memorable.

Ken Weston
Portland, Oregon

In 1959, upon graduation from high school, my twin brother and I drove over to Austin, Minnesota, to join the Air Force. We went back home and waited for news of whether or not we were accepted, and if so, when we'd report for our induction physical up in Minneapolis. In a few weeks we both got our notice of acceptance.

My twin was called first due to an opening in the Fire Fighting and Aircraft Crash Rescue School, an area in which he was interested. My entrance date was delayed until August 13, a day that will live in infamy. Free at last, free at last.

Why the Air Force? Well, I didn't think I wanted to live on board a ship and have to sleep in tight quarters with lots of other guys. I also was afraid of deep water, due to nearly drowning during my junior year.....a fear I held until I entered college four years later, when I forced myself to take a swimming class, just to see if I could do it. It worked.

Motivation? Simple. I saw no future on the farm. My parents were from the old school: "Don't spare the rod or you'll spoil the child." Boy—they ran that one into the ground!

I not only saw the Air Force as a way out of something, but also as an opportunity to learn something new, maybe be able to earn my way into the cockpit of an aircraft, maybe to travel around the world and see things I'd only yet dreamed of seeing.

My uncles were all WWII veterans, but their service was obviously much different than mine would be. After all, we were in a "cold war", where nothing happens and nobody gets killed.

Those things didn't matter to me. I was ready for any challenge, no matter how difficult or dangerous. I was a crack shot with a rifle, but figured I'd use my brains in the Air Force, rather than my brawn in the Army or Marines. In my 17-year-old mind, it just made sense that the Air Force had to be able to give me more than grunt work to do.

And how right I was! I'd do it all over again.

Lloyd "Smrk" Smrkovski
Germantown, Maryland

Without going into particulars, I needed to get the hell out of where I was. Being me, neither the Army nor the Marines appealed to me since camping out at the Holiday Inn was "roughing it". I grew up on the water and had no desire to go to sea either with the Navy or the Coast Guard. I wanted to go overseas and the Coast Guard was mainly U.S. bound. I had a friend who enlisted in the USCG during Korea and spent his whole tour assigned to Governor's Island in New York City and only 20 miles from his home.

That left the U.S. Air Force. After seeing the movie, "Wake Me When It's Over" with the late Dick Shawn about an Airman Third Class on a Japanese island, I thought the Air Force looked okay.

Obviously, I never had any contact with anyone who had been in the Air Force. I only saw Air Force blues on some troops at Grand Central Station in New York City in the early-to-mid-

1950s. I thought the uniforms looked okay, and different from the uniforms of the other branches.

Had I known Vietnam was going to erupt when it did, I would have stayed in. In my day, there were way too many staff sergeants with over 10 years time in grade. Since it was only me, I would have had no problem with volunteering for several tours to make several stripes. Death was never a consideration, as I had no one to worry about or no one to worry about me.

I had one person and a couple of girls the guys put me in touch with to write to, and each time I got a letter from them, my return letter was usually a couple of sentences: "Got your letter and hope you are in good health." You can't tell people you're getting bombed out of your skull in A.P. Alley on a daily basis.

One person always got a money order from me each payday as pay back for the jet fare they paid from New York City to San Francisco on the way to Misawa. I had used my travel pay for bus fare from Amarillo AFB, Texas, to New York City on the way to Japan.

Pete Herbst
Silver Lake, Ohio

I was a dirt-poor country boy looking for any way to get out of Dodge. In this case, Dodge was Anniston, Alabama.

I was a wild child with a wandering desire. I lived in a small town and went to school in an even smaller farm community. My dad "loaned me out" to every uncle, cousin, or friend whenever crops were due for harvest. I pulled corn, picked cotton, and even slaughtered hogs. I was very much aware that this was *not* what I wanted out of life.

At the age of 14, with less than ten dollars in my pocket, no planned destination, and no thoughts for future survival, I ran away from home. I ended up in what's now known as Babb-man country, Chattanooga, Tennessee.

I conned a German lady into letting me stay in her rooming house and found a job at the golf course on Signal Mountain. This only lasted two weeks and the lady, who suspected I was a

runaway, turned me in to the police and they, in turn, notified my parents.

I went back to school but was still the restless one, so at the age of 16, I joined the National Guard by lying about my age and forging my mother's signature on several required papers. That didn't fly either. They called my mother (boy, was I ever a smart and sly operator) and so, it was back to school.

During summer break, I told my mother I would not be going back to finish the final year of high school. Furthermore, I would no longer be a slave to every relative, and that the best thing she could do would be to sign the papers for me to join the service.

I think she was very smart in figuring out that might be my only salvation. The Korean War was on and she said she would *not* sign for me to join either the Army or the Marines. My dad was ex-Navy, and my two older brothers were Navy, so the defiant one chose the Air Force.

On October 2, 1951, I entered the Air Force and never looked back. This was the second best decision I ever made. It afforded me the independence and travel opportunities I desired, gave me a few bucks each month, and kept me out of the red-dirt fields of Alabama. In order to compete with my fellow airmen, it also forced me to finish my education.

It was a great 21-year ride. The subsequent 17 years with the National Security Agency were icing on the cake.

Royce Lloyd
Deceased

I was working my way through college, but was running out of money, so I took a year off to replenish my supply. I didn't even think about the draft until I received a letter ordering me to report for a pre-draft physical. We were told we would be drafted about 30 days after taking the physical.

At the place where the physical was given, 12th Army Corp in Atlanta, there were representatives from all the services. In other words, they were recruiters. I didn't want to waste two years in the Army with four reserve years to follow. Since my father was in the Air Force, I decided to join the same.

My test scores were high, but color blindness excluded me from most of the most desirable jobs except intelligence, and so the die was cast. In retrospect, I think while many doors were closed, the best of all was cast wide open.

Ed White
Decatur, Georgia

Well, it sounds as if I was the only one who joined up to dodge the *draft*. I had a good job, but I was classified in 1-A, and had already taken my draft physical and passed. I went right to the Air Force recruiter and signed up. I left for Basic Training at Sampson AFB, New York two days later.

The reason I chose the Air Force was because all the Army boys were heading for Korea.

George Hennis
Henrietta, Texas

I didn't make my college basketball team. Doo Wop was over, and solid Cs through my sophomore year were a bit of a drag. Pushing 19, the Army was going to get me, so I joined the good old Air Force.

I wish I could say it was patriotic fervor brought on by the Cuban Missile Crisis. Nope, it was just time to leave the neighborhood and go exploring.

I got Number One in my Morse Operator class and chose Misawa. I couldn't understand the distinction; the whole class went to Misawa. Anyway, the experience must have left a good impression, 'cause I'm still talking about it and I'm 60 years old.

Tom Ryan
Bronxville, New York

I had joined the Army National Guard, an anti-aircraft unit, while still in high school in February 1956. After graduating in May, I found a job working in a slaughter house/sausage kitchen (ugh).

I bought a 1956 Chevy, and terrorized the streets of Salem, Oregon, until October when some friends said they were going to talk to the Air Force recruiter. I joined up just looking for a better job I guess.

At Lackland, I asked to be an airborne radio operator, and was told to go to some building for a "flight physical". There, I was handed some earphones, and tested for "dit dah" recognition. Then it was on to Keesler.

I enjoyed my time at Misawa, had lots of fun, but was quite ready to return to the States after my two year tour was up. I volunteered to extend my enlistment if I could be sent to Germany or England, but was unable to do that for some reason.

I was discharged at Lowry AFB in Colorado in October of 1960.

Lowell McCreight
Keizer, Oregon

I graduated from high school in May of 1955. I left home at 6 a.m. the following morning, walking down a dusty road with twelve dollars in my pocket and a small handbag with what clothes I owned. I caught a ride into Raleigh, North Carolina at the highway. I went to my aunt's house and slept on the couch for a few nights while I applied for jobs all over town.

There were plenty of manual labor jobs available...not for me...farming had soured me on that. I had the skills for office jobs, but no one would hire me because of the draft looming in the future. They didn't want to invest in training and then losing me.

I went out one night with a couple of buddies, got drunk, and we decided to join the Navy the next morning together. Around 11 a.m., I showed up at the recruiter's office; no one else did! The Navy recruiter was out to lunch, literally, so the Air Force recruiter chatted me up and signed me up. I was so naive about the

military that I thought everyone in the Air Force had something to do with airplanes. Suited me just fine!

After a breeze Basic and classification at the Green Monster, I wound up at Headquarters, USAF Security Service at Kelly AFB, Texas, for pre-language training. I tried to flunk out, but they wouldn't let me. In December of 1955, I arrived at Syracuse University for Russian language training.

I went from there to Misawa, then Detachment 3 at Okushiri, then back to Misawa, and returned to the States in 1958. I planned to get out, but since my father said there were no jobs available in my home town, I reenlisted for Syracuse again and Germany thereafter.

I took Romanian at Syracuse and was then assigned to 6901st at Zweibrucken, after I married a Syracuse gal. I finished college during my stay at Zweibrucken by taking night classes with the University of Maryland. I got my degree in June of 1963. By this time, I had made staff sergeant and had two kids with a third on the way.

I returned to Headquarters USAFSS in 1963, waiting for discharge in 1964.

I wanted to be a pilot and the Air Force said they needed pilots. I tested for a pilot training slot, got it, had to go to Officer Training School (OTS) first, and did so. While in OTS, pilot training slowed down. The first Pilot Training Class available to me put me 30 days too old to attend! I tried my damndest to get waiver—no go!

I had a decision to make—stay in or get out. I had the option. I decided to stay for 11 more years and ended up staying for 12. I retired in 1976 from the 6948th at Medina Air Force Station, Texas, as Operations Officer with rank of Major.

I don't regret any of it, the good times or bad!

Wilson Leonard
Troutdale, Virginia

I graduated high school in 1950 at 15 years of age, two years ahead of my peers, and we didn't have kindergarten, plus it was just 11 grades back then. My uncle was starting school and I

thought I was supposed to go, too. My dad asked the school superintendent if I could go and he said, "If he can do the work." The teacher said the same thing. When I finished high school, I was still too young to go to work except on the farm, so I went to Junior College and helped my dad farm. I finished two years of college but didn't have money to continue my education, so I helped my dad farm.

1953 was a terrible draught year and 1954 was even worse. I was costing my dad more money than I was worth to him, and the draft was still in effect, so I checked in with the Air Force recruiter.

Away I went to Lackland AFB, Texas, in January 1955. In basic, I was the flight commander, sort of in charge when the Tactical Instructor wasn't there, so Basic Training was a snap especially for an ole farm boy.

I took that battery of tests to check what I was suited for. The counselor asked me about going to language school, and I told him I had enough trouble with English. Just send me over to that spy school at Kelly AFB, Texas.

So away I went: I asked for Germany and got Japan. I wound up in Misawa and then Wakkanai. What an experience! I would do it all over again in a heartbeat.

The main reason I went into service was to help my folks out; I don't think I knew about the G.I. Bill when I went in! By the time I finished Basic, I knew about it and a lot more.

I can't think of any four years that had more of an impact on my life than the years in the Air Force. The Air Force put me in situations and places I would never have otherwise encountered. I don't regret my decision at all—as a matter of fact, I think now it was a great decision because I don't know where I would have wound up.

With the G.I. Bill, I was able to go on to college and get my Doctor of Veterinary Medicine and, after going back in the Air Force as a Veterinary Officer, I was able to get a Masters of Science in Public Health.

I got out of the Air Force, but I stayed with the Air National Guard. When I saw how good President Reagan was going to be to the military, I made arrangements to get into the Army

Veterinary Corps, since the Air Force had done away with their Veterinary Corps. That's how I came to retire from the Army.

The Security Service was my favorite. Who knows—if the G.I. Bill had not been available, I might have made Security Service a career. Worse things could have happened.

So I might owe it all to the military and the Air Force.

Keith Thigpen
Vidalia, Georgia

1957 sounds like a big year for the Air Force. I graduated June 3 of that year and left on a bus from Wauchula, Florida, headed for Jacksonville on the June 4. I passed everything, but was two pounds underweight.

The sergeant said, "Mann, you have to weigh at least 105 pounds at your height."

I asked for a ticket to Lake Wales because there was nothing back in Wauchula for me. I lived with my dad and aunt for a few months and then moved to town. I worked in the orange groves that summer and then became a bookkeeper trainee. I was already in the Army National Guard. I applied for the six months active duty program with the Guard, but was told I had enlisted too early (1956) and wasn't eligible.

In November 1958, I got the bug again and enlisted on the 6th. This time I was accepted. I arrived in Texas on November 7, took six weeks Basic Training, and then got orders to the Morse Operator School at Keesler AFB, Mississippi. I finally entered school in February, skipped ahead two weeks, and graduated in August.

I loved being part of something bigger than myself and doing important work for my country. The Air Force discovered something at which I was exceptionally good, and it gave me a new self-confidence. Traveling and seeing "faraway places with strange-sounding names" was good, too.

And I made new friends from all over the country. Some of them keep up with me after more than forty years. It may sound self-righteous, and if so I apologize, but I loved sharing my faith in Christ in an environment where not many were interested in

religious faith. It gave me a sense of mission in addition to my Air Force mission. I thoroughly enjoyed being part of an elite organization such as Security Service.

I sometimes wish I'd stayed in for twenty and then gone into the ministry; however, God has *his* plan and I think I followed it for my life. My motives for enlisting were not love of country, although I did and do love the USA. I enlisted for excitement, adventure, secure pay, etc.

I was blessed. After three years of college, I used the G.I. Bill to pay for my last year of college and three years of seminary.

Hooray for the USAF!

Harry Mann
St. Augustine, Florida

I came straight out of high school and into the Air Force in 1951. There was no work for a young man in Central Kentucky. I was the youngest of seven and tired of hand me downs.

I was 17 years old and I had four brothers who had just returned from the Korean War and World War II. I was excited when I went in the Air Force and I was excited to get out 20 years and 11 days later.

Two days after retiring from the Air Force, I began a U.S. Postal Service career which lasted another 20 years. I then attended Aeon Bible College in Columbus, Ohio, under the G.I. Bill, and have been a pastor since 1976.

The Lord, the Air Force, and the U.S. Post Office have been good to me. I am thankful and blessed.

Charles Holmes
Louisville, Kentucky

During my high school years from 1953 to 1957, I only knew of three things I really wanted to do—chase the girls, play any sport that had a ball, and just do well enough to graduate. I pretty much did all of this.

My father was the supervisor in the weaving department of a local cotton mill and he pretty much saw to it that I got the worst jobs that could be had in that place. I was doffing cloth on the third shift just before graduation and I let a steel rod drop down onto my right foot, breaking a toe. At that point in time, I prayed a prayer to God, asking him to please let me graduate from high school and turn 18 years old, so I would not have to get my mother's signature to join some branch of the military. I promised Him if he answered my prayer, I would never go back in a cotton mill the rest of my life.

The draft was on and my time was close. I did not want to lug an M1 through the mud and I did not want to float around on a big old boat. So I enlisted in the Air Force and was inducted on October 7, 1957.

I was sent to Lackland and was given the battery of tests to see what I could do. They told me I was going to learn to copy Morse code. I immediately told them they had the wrong guy because I could not pass code for my second merit badge in the Boy Scouts. But they insisted I could learn it, so off to Keesler I went.

After graduating at the top of my class as a 29331 on May 20, 1958, I headed for Misawa. I spent two wonderful years there, chasing those dits and doing something that a whole lot of other people could not do.

I really grew up at Misawa because, when I got there, I still had a couple of the same priorities that I had had when I was in high school...chasing women and playing ball. I never managed to catch any of the women, but I did play ball on the base baseball team for a couple of years.

After leaving Misawa, I was shipped up to Presque Isle, Maine, and cross-trained as a Communications Center Specialist (Teletype Operator). The weather in Maine was almost a carbon copy of Misawa in that after the first snow you could not see the first floor of the barracks.

I got out of the Air Force in July of 1961 and was accepted into Furman University. I met my wife at Furman and was married in August of 1963 and have been ever since. We have two wonderful kids and four beautiful granddaughters. I ended up in

the home building industry and have spent the last 35 years building people's dreams.

By the way...I did have to break that promise to God. I had to go into a cotton mill for one of my college Management Classes.

Joe B. Jones
Easley, South Carolina

All through high school, I delivered newspapers. There was a grocery store a couple of doors from the newspaper office. One day in April or May of 1949, the owner of the store asked me what I was going to do that summer. I told him I was going to join the Navy. He asked me to work for him until September because he really needed some summertime help. I agreed to work for him.

In August, my uncle purchased a small gas station/restaurant/bar/grocery store/bus stop business in Collinsville, Ohio. He *really* needed me to come work for him. He wasn't able to pay much, but did provide my room and board. It was like he was not going to be able to make this place profitable unless I went to work for him. So, again I agreed. Plus, I had really not thought any more about going into the service.

Two years later, I got a notice to report for a pre-induction physical in Indianapolis, Indiana. Now, in 1951 the rumor was many of the draftees were being selected for the U.S. Marines. I may have let them draft me into the Army, but I wasn't taking any chances. Before I got any induction papers I joined the Air Force. And, as they say, the rest is history.

Gene Frasur
Liberty, Indiana

I came from a small town of about 10,000 in South Dakota. The opportunities to have a meaningful job or career were practically nil. I dropped out of high school to work so I could help support my family. When I turned 17, I realized I had to

make a decision about my life, or I would end up like so many others...in a minimum wage job with no future.

One day, I happened to run into an older friend who had just been discharged from the Army and had enlisted in the Air Force. He encouraged me to think about it. I really didn't have to think very hard. I had two brothers who had served in the Marines and Army. I had no desire to be a soldier. The Navy did not appeal to me for reasons I really can't remember, but the Air Force had always seemed the perfect match and choice.

On the day I turned 17 and a half, I walked into the Air Force recruiting office. I took the test, and they said I had scored higher than anybody taking the test. I don't know if that was true or not.

I told my mom I was going to join the Air Force. At first, she was really resistant to it because I don't think she wanted to see me leave. I stood my ground against my headstrong Czech mom and said, "Mom either you sign my papers now so I can make a life for myself, or when I'm 18, I will leave anyway."

I took her down to the recruiting station and they were so great with my mom explaining what opportunities the Air Force could open up for me. She signed the papers. I entered the Air force on August 6, 1958.

If I had written the job description I would have wanted, it could not have been more perfect than being in the USAFSS and serving at Misawa. I went in as a green kid with very little confidence and came out a man with confidence in myself. That confidence enabled me to finish high school and I now have a BA in Psychology and an MA in Clinical Counseling with post doctoral in Vocational Rehabilitation Medicine.

I owe so much to the Air Force. It might have been the best four years of my life. I will always be grateful for what it gave me.

Ken Adams
Hartford, South Dakota

There used to be a recruiting poster with the observation, "He needed the Air Force more than the Air Force needed him". That was exactly my situation.

I graduated from high school in 1952 and was still only 17 years old. The Korean War was still raging and job prospects were bleak, other than pumping gas or flipping burgers. I tried college for a semester, but the lack of commitment and with no financial support, I was “one and done”.

I had not heard from my Draft Board, but it could only have been a matter of time and probably sooner than later. Since I had always been fascinated with planes and flying, and knowing I did not want to be in the Army, I joined the Air Force. Even that was not easy, since I had to find a recruiter who was short of his quota. I had to leave the state to find one.

I was a good high school student, so scoring on the aptitude tests was easy enough. I was selected for electronics/radar without a clue on what the field was about. The USAF (with more wisdom than me) figured that I had the aptitude if I would do my share of the work.

Four years later, I finished my obligation, was discharged, and was able to secure a position with Hughes Aircraft as an electronics technician in Culver City, California. From there I went back to college, was married, and continued 33 years of my working career with General Electric.

Regardless of how much I enhanced my skills, it was the Air Force and its foresight that gave me the cornerstone for a career in technology. Perhaps it was not by coincidence that all but two years of my career was in the military and aerospace environment.

Again I will say...thank you USAF.

Bob Fields

Deceased

I graduated high school in 1953. There were few job opportunities in my hometown, and my parents couldn't afford to pay for college. My best friend had opted to leave school in his senior year and join the Air Force. He had nothing but good things to say about his new life.

I worked at a couple of jobs during the summer that had no future. The Korean War was coming to an end, so I finally talked

my parents into giving their consent for me to enlist. I was only 17 years old.

I went to Fresno, California, for my physical and swearing in. I spent that night in a hotel, which was a first. The next morning, I was on a train (another first) for San Antonio.

I am grateful to the Air Force for helping me mature, for providing me with a terrific job, and for my first overseas assignment, where I met Margaret. Next year we will celebrate our fiftieth anniversary.

The Air Force, and especially Security Service, enabled me to enjoy working with some of the brightest and most capable people I have ever met. All these years later, I still have many friends I met during my 21 years of service. It has been a great ride.

Clyde Orr
Visalia, California

Tallapoosa County, Alabama was *not* a hotbed of employment opportunities when I graduated high school in 1957. The only employment available was work in one of the many cotton mills. So, very reluctantly, I signed on at one of the mills and began my very short career learning how to weave Martex towels.

I did not like the mill, I did not like the work, and I absolutely despised my supervisor. So, I went to talk to the Navy recruiter. The next thing I knew, I was on a bus headed to Atlanta, Georgia, where I took a whole pile of tests, including a physical, which I failed.

So, it was back to Alabama and back to my old job in the cotton mill. Two weeks later, I was at the Air Force recruiting office in Opelika, Alabama. Next thing I knew, I was on my way to Montgomery for another battery of tests and another physical, *which I passed!* From there, it was on to an aircraft headed for San Antonio and Lackland.

I have always figured that someone up there likes me and arranged for me to fail that Navy physical. To this date, I have never regretted a minute that I spent in the Air Force and I

absolutely loved the time spent in the USAFSS, especially in Misawa.

To this day, I firmly believe that had it not been for the Air Force, I would still be sweating away in some Alabama cotton mill, just across the state line from Georgia.

Jim Boone
Buford, Georgia

I somehow knew I was going to join the Air Force by the time I was a freshman in high school. My brother joined in 1955. I graduated from high school in Manchester, New Hampshire, in 1956. I was 17 but would be 18 in another month. I joined the Army National Guard and had served 1 year, 8 months, and 14 days by the time I enlisted in the Air Force. As a poor black kid, I felt that the Air Force would offer me an opportunity to “learn a trade”.

I went to Lackland for Basic and did the full 11 weeks. I do not have fond memories of San Antonio based on the one trip I made into the city. You must remember that this was 1956 Texas. I quickly found that I was not welcome in some places, and hastily returned to base.

From basic, I was assigned to 202 School at March AFB, California. I was very proud to complete the course, without phasing back. I requested an assignment to Europe, only because I would get big travel pay for crossing the country. Of course, the needs of the Air Force came first, and I received \$33.38 travel pay and one day travel time from March to Travis AFB, California.

I departed Travis for Misawa on my birthday, July 16, 1957 via Flying Tigers Airline. Due to crossing the International Date Line, I got shortchanged on a full birthday celebration. Flight time was 29 ½ hours, and the stewardess seem to be old enough to be my grandmother. I’m sure some of them were really old, like 45 or so.

When I reported to my first shift, I was wide eyed and very naïve. After about an hour, I knew what we were doing was very important, not only to our country, but also to the free world. I became a man overnight.

Sid Scales
Brockton, Massachusetts

I graduated from a small, rural Ohio town high school in May of 1956. I traveled 100 miles to Ohio State University that fall and was no more ready for college (maturity-wise) than anything. I bombed out academically and they required me to go home for at least one quarter or until I got serious about my education.

Those were the draft days, and when I could not find a meaningful job, I enlisted in the Air Force in March 1957. I knew I did not want the Army or Marines, so I was torn between the Air Force and Navy. A good friend was a career Air Force man who had served his first term in the Navy. His advice was, "It makes little difference which you join, because for the first month, you are going to think you made the biggest damn mistake of your life."

He was right of course, and I remind him of the story every time I see him. I stayed in the Air Force a second term but got out to go to college in 1965 when I got stuck in the Strategic Air Command and the Air Force was no fun anymore. If I could have stayed in the Security Service, I may have made a career of it. I loved and valued my time in the Air Force, but have never regretted getting out.

Denny Arnold
Victoria, Texas

I graduated from high school in May of 1958 at the ripe old age of 17. I began looking for a job but none were to be found. I would go around to construction sites as I always enjoyed working on and building things. I kept being told to check back, but no job.

A neighbor who worked at the local Winn-Dixie "put in a good word for me." While waiting to hear back on this job I got impatient and began the process of joining the Air Force. My Dad

and uncle had both been in the Army Air Force during World War II and both encouraged me to join.

I got the job at Winn-Dixie and had worked for about six weeks when I got a call from the Air Force recruiter that I was "good to go."

I looked at what I was doing—sack boy, some shelf stocking, and every time I got over 20 hours, I was told not to come back 'till next week. It seemed I was doomed to work no more than 20 hours a week even though I had some 12-hour days. So, I joined the Air Force on September 12, 1958

Years later, while taking a college course in Economics, I found we had a minor/major economy downturn in 1957 to 1958, and that was probably one reason it was so hard to find work. A strong second possibility was that in Louisville, Kentucky, there just wasn't much happening in jobs.

Like others, I got to Lackland and was retested. I did really well the second time on Mechanical and Engineering categories and thought I would like a job in one of these areas. That was when I begin to find there was an Air Force way and the real world way. I was told by my classifier that I had to be considered for jobs based on my *original* scores. Go figure—why take the second batch of tests?

I was tested for Morse code, and since I did okay on this, I could try for Morse Intercept School—whatever that was. As they say, the rest is history.

I completed school in June 1959, arrived at Misawa later that month because I was only given nine days leave, and ten days travel. To this day, I am not sure why I had such a short time in preparing for a two year tour. I ended up finally getting back to see Mom and Dad in June 1963 with my Japanese bride in tow.

I have always had a positive outlook on my assignments. I was not one of those who kept saying their best assignment was "the one they just came from or the one they were going to." So, I have had some really great tours over a near-29 year Air Force career. However, as we all seem to agree, Misawa was a very special tour and time in my life.

Tom "Ike" Isaacs
San Antonio, Texas

I graduated from high school in 1956, and there were virtually no job prospects I had any desire to pursue.

I had been involved in the Ground Observer Corps for a couple of years and enjoyed working with the Air Force personnel who ran it. I had progressed pretty far up the ladder and, after talking with them for a long time, they told me I'd probably do well in the Air Force.

From that experience, I wanted to be in the radar tracking business, but with all that high-tech (for the 1950s) testing they did on us in basic, they felt I had an affinity for languages. Six months at Monterey, California, and I became a 203.

I didn't really want to stay in the Air Force, but didn't want to come back to the States and take a chance on a year in an assignment I didn't like. Therefore, I opted to extend my enlistment for a year and finish out my enlistment at Misawa. I can't say I've ever regretted the decision.

Also, I got lucky and made Airman First Class, even though they knew I wasn't staying in.

John Potts
London, Kentucky

For many folks, the opportunities offered by the Air Force boiled down to "Three hots and a cot," which is a gross oversimplification. In mid-1957, just after high school graduation, I enlisted in the USAF and promptly took a pay cut!

Because my dad was a union representative, he arranged for me to get a job in a local A&P supermarket where I earned \$1,543 a year. That income had increased to \$1,813 the year before I enlisted. Joining the Air Force reduced my annual pay to \$1,334 before it began "climbing" again in 1959.

Since avarice was obviously not my driving force, maybe it was a hint of patriotism, liberally seasoned with boredom, as well as a post-prom breakup with an older gal I had dated for three years. That was my motivation.

In July of 1957, I left Providence, Rhode Island, and began my real future, which continues today, after having retired from

the Air Force after a mostly wonderful 30 year career in August of 1987.

Despite rumors to the contrary however, this Chief has *not* retired from more than 44 years of marriage to Mrs. Masako Kelly of Hakodate, Hokkaido, Japan!

Steve Kelly
Victorville, California

I am from the small town of Waukegan, Illinois, which is about 42 miles north of Chicago. A good friend, who had joined the Air Force in 1952, came home in 1954 wearing his dress blue uniform. At that moment, I knew I was going to join the Air Force.

I left home for Basic Training in October of 1955. I spent 11 weeks at Lackland AFB, in San Antonio, Texas. After spending Christmas at home, I left for Keesler AFB, Mississippi. Upon graduating from Radio School, I was assigned to the 6921st RGM. Soon after that, its designation was changed to the 6989th RSM.

I stayed in Misawa for four years, and then was assigned to McConnell AFB in Wichita, Kansas. Since the job we did in Misawa was not used in the States, I had to cross train and went into Teletype operations. I worked both in the Comm Center and on the switchboard. For the remainder of my Air Force career, I was a Telecommunications Specialist.

I retired while stationed at Ft. Meade, Maryland, with 20 years and six months service. My time in the Air Force was awesome and memorable. I have no regrets about the decision I made.

John Hughey
Colton, California

I graduated from Traveler's Rest High School in South Carolina on June 6, 1957. A few days before graduation, the Air Force recruiter paid a visit to our senior class and I was so impressed I signed up. I had always been interested in airplanes,

so I thought I would be flying all over the world or maybe even working on them. Surprise!!

On June 10, 1957, my mother drove a friend and me down to the recruiting station in Greenville, South Carolina, and as we were on our way, we passed the bus taking the remainder of our class on the senior trip to Washington, D.C.

I was not given the aptitude tests until I was in Basic Training, and the next thing I knew, I was headed to Keesler AFB for Morse code training.

My first overseas assignment was Darmstadt, Germany, in the 6911th Radio Group (Mobile). After three years, for some unfathomable reason, I was not ready to go home. A friend, Bill Copas, and I had heard about a new unit opening in San Vito, Italy, so we extended our enlistments and, when our Darmstadt tour was over, we drove down to southern Italy in an old 1950 Chevrolet.

When the tour at San Vito was over, I went back to the States and separated from the Air Force. I said I would dig ditches before rejoining, but when I found myself on that hillside in North Carolina, working with my Dad, digging a ditch for a water line to some guy's summer home, I felt that I had satisfied my requirement. So the next time I saw the Air Force recruiter, I asked him what he could do for me.

He said he could get me back in with the same rank and job and all I would lose was my time-in-grade. He said I could go to either Saint Lawrence Island or Peshawar, Pakistan. I said I would rather be hot than cold, so I went to Peshawar. After that, I had tours at Goodfellow AFB, Texas; Yokota AB, Japan; Offutt AFB, Nebraska; Ramasun Army Station, Thailand; Misawa, and finally, back to Goodfellow where I retired on 30 June 1979 with 22 years of service.

Tommy Smart
San Angelo, Texas

I didn't join for any particular reason, other than avoiding the draft. In the beginning, I had no particular plans or goals, but

rather jumped on and enjoyed the ride from enlistment to retirement.

It was December 1955 and I was just 15 when I joined the Texas National Guard, known as the T-Patchers. (Oh yeah, me and Audie Murphy). I made every weekly drill, monthly bivouac, and summer training at North Ft. Hood, Texas for two weeks each year in 1956 and 1957.

In late 1957, I moved from Waco to Dallas and just stopped attending National Guard Drills. Not really a good idea. Threats of all kinds were issued, including my being reported to the Draft Board. So, in June 1958, I enlisted in the USAF.

I shipped off to Lackland (I will let you guess what I received at my very first "Mail Call"). A short six months later, I graduated from Basic Training, since I left Lackland for Keesler Air Force Base, Mississippi before completing Basic and finished there.

From KAFB, I went to Goodfellow for X2 training and then on to Misawa, Clark, Goodfellow (Instructor), Maxwell (T.V. Instructor Training), KAFB (FLR-9 Operator Training), Chicksands, Goodfellow, Ft. Devens (Signal Analysis Training), Wakkanaï, Goodfellow (Wideband Training), Chicksands, Ft. Devens, Ft. Meade, Maxwell (Professional Military Education Course Development Training) and then retirement in 1978.

Waco Wetterman
Schertz, Texas

When I graduated from High School in 1957 in a little Nebraska town, the choice was simple for me. I did not want to pump gas the rest of my life. I decided to join the Air Force in March of 1957 and went to Basic Training in August.

When visiting the Green Monster, I was given a choice between Petroleum, Oil, & Lubrication (POL) or Teletype Operations. I asked what POL was and he told me pumping gas. Well, that left me on my way to Cheyenne, Wyoming for Teletype Operations School.

Next, it was back to Lackland for Cryptographic Operations School. My first assignment out of Tech School was Misawa. Like most young 18 year olds, I loved it...The Alley, that is. Twenty-

one and a half years later, I retired and don't regret a day of it, even though Vietnam and the family separations were not nice.

I don't go back to the small Nebraska town much anymore. It has become even smaller and there is still nothing for a new high school graduate to do there.

Ron Fitzke
Colorado Springs, Colorado

Three of us from White Bear Lake in Minnesota, Class of 1950, were all signed up and ready to go in early June. We arrived at Lackland on June 15, and the Korean War started ten days later.

My dream had been to be an aerial photographer and attend the photo school at Lowry AFB in Denver, Colorado. The recruiter had assured me if I asked for it, I would get it. Yeah...sure...you betcha!

Lackland changed, seemingly overnight, to handle many more recruits. Tents went up on athletic fields, training days were lengthened, and our flight was cut from 12 weeks of training to eight.

When Basic was over, everyone got orders and left...except me! A first lieutenant working in Supply asked me if I could type, I said yes, and I spent the next few days filling out forms for him. This was not a bad job, and much better than marching in the hot sun. The Supply Sergeant and the lieutenant told me their backlog would be over in a month or so, and then they would help me get the Lowry AFB school assignment.

But within another day or two, I was given orders and a ride down the road to the 8th Radio Squadron (Mobile) at Brooks AFB, in San Antonio. No one at Lackland that I talked to could tell me anything about it, and when I got to Brooks, I was told nobody says anything about anything!

My first day of class, I was told we were going to be trained as Traffic Analysts, and I remember this lovely lady instructor complimenting me on my printing. Then we found out that Security Service "listens in on all radio transmissions of USAF airplanes, to assure they are complying with rules and regulations—but that's a secret."

After about a week of classes, I was told to report to personnel where they said I was going to get orders to the Army Language School in Monterrey, California to learn Russian. They told me it was a one year school, and I would have my enlistment extended one year.

I enlisted in the Air Force because I wanted to meet my military obligation, and qualify for the G.I. Bill, and continue my education after four years. So after a few days, I went back to Personnel and told them I didn't want to go to Monterrey. Perhaps I was also afraid of failing the course. The tech sergeant didn't hit me, but I think he wanted to! He said I was going to Japan as fast as he could get the orders done, either as an Air Policeman or a cook.

Our troopship had 2,500 Oklahoma National Guard troops on their way to Korea. I ended up an AP at 1st RSM at Johnson, and then an Orderly Room clerk at Detachment 11 in Misawa.

Tom Carroll
Arden Hills, Minnesota

The 1960s

I spent a year at Morehead State College in Kentucky from 1959 to 1960. I learned some bad habits and slept through a lot of classes. I spent a year of having fun and wasted my parents' hard-earned money. I then spent almost a year looking for a job with no luck. My dad worked at Wright-Patterson AFB and I enlisted in March 1961.

Len Engle
Gallipolis, Ohio

I graduated high school in 1960 and wondered what to do next. There wasn't a lot of opportunity in Gallipolis, Ohio, the

small town where I grew up. There still aren't, except now they do have a McDonalds.

My two older brothers had joined the Air Force, so I figured why not go that route, too. I was 17 when I graduated, so I had to wait until later in the year or get parental permission.

I was inducted into the Air Force in nearby Ashland, Kentucky on October 11, 1960 one week short of my 18th birthday. I had a job and got to have cake too! The job lasted 22 years and was the best move I ever made.

Lou Casey
San Angelo, Texas

I had gone to the University of Nebraska for a year after high school until the money ran out. I worked for about six months and then a friend, who had been in the Navy, suggested we ditch the job we had at the local gas company and join the Navy.

They wouldn't take him back and the only job I could get was fireman. When I told the recruiter I didn't want to fight fires, he told me that wasn't what a fireman did; they ran the engines of the ship.

I told him I didn't think I could be in the Navy because I got seasick watching the toilet flush and I beat feet to the Air Force recruiter. That's a decision I've never regretted.

Larry Huigens
San Angelo, Texas

I was nearly a year out of high school in March of 1965, working for a furniture factory in McGregor, Texas, and contemplating what to do with the rest of my life.

I got my notice to appear for a draft physical in the mail on Thursday. I knew if I got drafted, I would end up in the jungles being shot at by a lot of people who didn't like anyone with round eyes.

At the time, my girlfriend's mother was dating the Air Force recruiter, so I dropped in to see him on Thursday afternoon. I did the paperwork on Friday, was in Dallas on Monday for the physical, and started my first day of Basic Training on Tuesday.

I wanted the finance career field, but I guess I did too well on the tests there at Lackland and ended up chasing ditties for 10-odd years.

I don't regret a bit of it. I had a lot of good times and got to meet and work with some of the greatest and nicest folks on Earth.

Charles Millsap
Temple, Texas

In my senior year of high school, I decided I wanted to fly (a super-strong adolescent dream), and knew the Air Force was the best chance to do it. So I went to the recruiter in Levittown, Pennsylvania, took the ASVAB [Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery] test, got straight 95s across the board, and had the recruiter doing handsprings.

Now, I wasn't the brightest bulb on Times Square, so I believed the hype. But I had the urge, so I took a delayed enlistment so I could finish up summer school and get my diploma—darned bookkeeping teacher!

The first time I ever flew in my life was to San Antonio from Philadelphia. The only other times I flew was from assignment to assignment, or home on leave. But I got my wish. I flew—and usually at the expense of the Air Force.

No grouching here for the 20 I put into a blue suit! I went to, and lived, in places I'd only seen pictures of or read about. I got to experience cultures I'd have never been able to afford. I met and worked alongside of some of the greatest folks a guy could ever hope for.

Regrets??? Not on your life!

Bill “Spanky” Parker
Hickory, North Carolina

After a year of college at Middle Tennessee State, I had no idea what to shoot for. So I quit, worked as an Iowa driver's license examiner until the draft was inevitable, then joined the Air Force in April 1962 rather than wait.

I ended up staying just short of 32 years...10-plus years enlisted, most of it with USAFSS. I lost my clearance when I married KC.

I went to Officer Training School in 1972. As an officer, I went back to USAFSS (and Misawa) as Squadron Commander, then on to Chicksands, United Kingdom; Osan, Korea; and Maxwell AFB, Alabama. I closed it out there as Military Director of the Air University Library in late 1993.

It was a great run.

Marv Borgman
Prattville, Alabama

When I walked off the stage of Memorial Auditorium after graduating from Chattanooga Central High School in June of 1958, I was probably the only person in my class who did not want to graduate. I *liked* high school because I knew I had it made—girls, sock hops, pep rallies, parties, girls, good friends, football/basketball/baseball games, decent hours, easy work, girls, and the folks picked up the bills. Who would want to walk off from a deal like that? But walk I did. Problem was, I didn't know where I was going.

What I did know is it certainly wasn't the military. Three years of Junior ROTC in high school had convinced me I was a confirmed civilian. So I got me a job as a cave guide at Ruby Falls Caverns. That employment went away when the tourists went away for the winter.

It was the next spring before I could find another job, this time as a delivery boy at a dental supply company. That one lasted about a year before I hit the big time—warehouseman at McKesson & Robbins Drug Wholesalers.

By the time I had been at McKesson & Robbins about 18 months, I was 21 years old with the draft creeping up on me. Even

though I had no desire to join the military, I knew I had to do *something*, for if I did *nothing*, I'd end up playing goalie on the Army Rifle Team. So I checked out the other services, chose the lesser of all evils, and headed out for the wild blue yonder.

The Air Force turned out to be a pretty good deal—they gave me clothing, food, a roof over my head, and a [very] few dollars for spending money. Then they put me in a kick-ass command called Security Service, trained the crap out of me, and *made* me go to Misawa and later, Wakkanaï. But even with all that good fortune, I spurned the Air Force's offer to make our relationship permanent and chose not to reenlist at the end of my first enlistment.

When I returned home, I found a job in a chemical factory making exceptional money...\$2.10 per hour. That may not sound like much, but I was driving a new Ford Fairlane Sport Coupe, had a nice apartment, ate steak any time I wanted, and had plenty of "walking around" money.

Meanwhile back on the job...the labor was of the manual variety, the hard hat I had to wear messed up my hair, the chemicals made me smell real bad, and I got dirt under my fingernails. *On second thought*, I thought, *that Air Force gig wasn't all that bad*.

And so for the second time in five years, I was motivated to join the Air Force. My goal the first time had been to travel, drink whiskey, chase women, and have a good time. The second time, it was to pursue a career. And so I did. It was one hell of a 30-year ride worth twice the price of the ticket.

Wayne Babb
Chattanooga, Tennessee

Boy! My story is not nearly as grandiose as most of those before me. I graduated high school in June of 1962. My best buddy called to say he was going in the Air Force and did I want to join him. I passed for the time being, as I was madly in love with my high school sweetie pie, and didn't want to leave St. Louis.

I had a job in the stock room of a small department store. The other people in the store were unionized and were pressuring me to join up. When the pressure got to the point where it was join or quit, I quit.

After a week or so of unemployment, my Mom started bugging me about not doing anything. She said, "Get another job or join the service."

So I talked to the Marines and the Air Force. Something about the Marines appealed to me. Maybe it was the esprit de corps, the uniform, the reputation....I don't know. But in the end, I decided to take the country club approach and joined the Air Force.

At the Green Monster, I took all the tests we all took and tried to do my best on all of them. I had been in the Boy Scouts and earned the Morse code merit badge, so when taking the Morse code test, I guess I did pretty good. When told I was going to be a Morse intercept operator, I told them no way. My dad was a ham radio operator and he had tried to get me involved and I wasn't interested. No way was I going to be a Morse intercept operator. Well....you know how *that* went.

The good news was my best buddy was at Keesler when I got there from basic. He was training in some kind of electronic maintenance, I think. Anyway we got together a lot, which made things better.

The biggest reason I didn't want to join the Security Service was I didn't want to travel. I wanted to be stationed close to home to be with my sweetie pie. Well, by the time I went home on leave, she was somebody else's sweetie pie.

That's my story and I'm sticking to it.

Jay Emmer
Kirkwood, Missouri

I did poorly in high school. I liked to play and had no thought of going to college. I guess I PO'd people in high school 'cause I always scored in the top whatever on those goofy aptitude tests. So I just got through by the skin of the old teeth.

I had no confidence in myself and after high school I did factory work at Western Electric. Not bad since it was clean and it

got me my first car—a two year old 1958 Chevy convertible, powder blue with matching blue top.

I guess the car and losing lots of weight started to grow my confidence. For the first time, I had a few girls saying yes to dates. I even kissed one. Then I met a special girl, but the draft was getting close. I talked two of my friends and relatives into joining the Air Force because that was what I was going to do. But I had to wait until my girl hit the appropriate age (in her parents eyes) to become engaged. We decided I'd go in for Basic and Tech School, and then we'd get married.

I finished Lackland and was told I was going to be a "Radio Intercept Analyst". I had to wait for a security clearance, but no one knew what the heck that job was. I finally matured and really fought for number one in the class to get first choice of assignment. From a real ditz in high school, I finished second in my class in 202 School.

Unfortunately, all assignments came in as England or Japan. First place took England; I had to take Japan. My wife had relatives right outside of Chicksands, so it was a disappointment at the time.

Looking back though, I loved Japan. We were able to afford to do things and see things we wouldn't have been able to do in England.... and it would have been a great loss if Fate had not put me there.

Dennis Harlach
Marietta, Pennsylvania

I graduated from high school in 1964 and decided to attend Humboldt State College in northern California. Unfortunately, I did more partying than studying and my grades reflected it.

After I flunked "dumbbell English", I made the decision to join the military. Walking down the steps of Founders Hall I said, "Navy - no, I get sea sick"; "Army - no, there's something brewing in a place called Vietnam"; "Marines - Hell no". That left the Air Force.

My recruiter showed me pictures of beautiful barracks and assured me that, since I was a drummer, I would be able to get into the Air Force Band. I found out later that you audition for the Air Force Band *before* you join.

I did pretty well on the Morse code test and the rest is history. I pulled three overseas tours chasing ditties (Misawa, Shu Lin Kou, Taiwan & Tan Son Nhut, Vietnam). Along the way, I met some super people and enjoyed the bases (even TSN).

I lost my clearance when I married a Chinese lady and worked in the Administrative field for the rest of my career. I spent a total of 20 years, 6 months and 18 days in the Air Force and don't regret it at all.

Ray Parker
Chino Hills, California

After graduating high school, I couldn't afford to go to college. Somebody suggested getting a government loan, but I didn't want to start out my post high school years in debt. Since it was still draft days, I figured I might as well join the Air Force and get my military commitment out of the way.

Two days before high school graduation, I broke my arm in three places trying to make a catch in a baseball game. So, that ruined the summer and also delayed my enlistment for almost four months. When I did get around to signing up, I was told there would be about a five or six month wait—probably into the spring sometime.

In the middle of December, the recruiter called and said if I wanted, I could go to Basic between Christmas and New Year's since a lot of people didn't want to go during the holidays. In those days, New Year's wasn't a big deal to me and, since I wouldn't miss Christmas at home, I said okay and left for Lackland on December 27, 1961.

In those days, you pretty much went into whatever field the Air Force dictated, so I've often wondered where I would have ended up if I had gone in immediately after graduation. Not complaining, though. Obviously, I wasn't all that upset since I

stayed for twenty, had some great tours, and met a lot of greater people.

Ron Marcoullier
Jessup, Maryland

I moved to Florida from South Carolina and got job with a survey outfit at \$1.10 an hour. I found out I couldn't even make my car payments at that rate.

I lived with my sister and her family, but still had no money. I got my draft notice and decided the Army wasn't for me. I joined the Air Force in February 1963.

My brother-in-law took me to the bus station in Cocoa Beach for the trip to Jacksonville. I asked to borrow a dollar to get something to drink. He didn't have a penny and neither did I.

Hard times, but it made me do something that was the best thing that could happened to me.

Ray B. "Pappy" Ivey
Gaffney, South Carolina

I got out of High School in 1960, worked three months at McDonalds, needed a better paying job, and so went too work for the Just Born Candy Factory. They're the people who make the little marshmallow peeps and bunnies.

From there, I worked for the Sure-fit Company making covers for trucks and cars. At that time, my brother wanted to go into the Coast Guard. So, my brother and I and two other buddies were all going to go into the Coast Guard, but we backed out at the last minute.

Two years later, I went to see the Air Force, Marine, Navy, and Army recruiters. I didn't want to suck mud or swim in the ocean, so I joined the Air Force in 1962. In 1984, I retired after serving 22 years, one month, and 18 days as a Communication Center Operator.

Timothy Dech
Alexandria, South Dakota

I graduated in 1967 at the middle of my class. I was not a good student, preferring instead to go surfing, fishing, or hunting. I was very good at play. I started the following fall semester at the local Junior College. I did okay, but I was really just going through the motions.

Two things convinced me that I would join the Air Force. One, while carrying a full load in school, I was working a full time job in a plastics factory. Second, and I guess the most influential, was Uncle Sam.

The day I turned 18 in August, I registered for the draft. Of course, since I was not yet in school, I was immediately classified 1A. I was told if I was in school, I could get a 2S deferment, but before that happened, the powers that be sent me a nice greeting.

At the time, they were drafting into the Army and the Marines. I had just watched three cousins go through the Marine Corps boot camp and knew that wasn't for me. I had two choices...enlist in the Navy or the Air Force.

I took tests for both and scored well enough to pick my career field. I wanted the Navy Nuclear School, but there was a waiting list of almost a year for that. Having already received my draft notice, this was not an option.

That left the Air Force, which made Dad happy, since he had been a master sergeant in the old Army Air Corps. I joined under The Delayed Enlistment Program and that got me off the hook with the Army and the Marines.

My experiences in Basic Training were not as bad as I had expected. For one thing, having watched my cousins go through Marine boot camp, I was convinced that one of the first things that would happen was the Tactical Instructor (TI) would take each one of us outside and beat us up just to show that they could. That never happened.

I took the ditty test and thought afterwards I had certainly flunked. I was actually relieved when the TI told us those guys got to carry radios on their back and chase the infantry around in

Nam. I felt pretty good about flunking that test. Imagine my surprise when I got my orders to Keesler.

With the exception of Hurricane Camille, things went pretty smooth at Biloxi and I was soon on my way to Misawa. Although I didn't know it then, Misawa would be the best thing that could have happened to me. I absolutely loved my three years there, but for a number of reasons, I didn't reenlist.

I love what I do now but even after all these years, I think back fondly and often to those times in the Air Force and all the great people I met.

Rob "Gohon" Price
Cypress, California

I graduated in 1960 and started at the local Junior College on a full ride scholarship. College seemed an extension of high school. Most of my friends were there, along with some interesting new girls, but I found I was packing two classes and dragging four.

Classes in social dancing and health do not make for a good start in college and the professor went through all the algebra I knew in the first five minutes of the class. One of my buddies sitting by me in Bonehead English class said they were going to see a couple of recruiters, Army and Air Force, and asked if I wanted to go.

Why not? The draft as going and the lottery had not kicked in yet, or even been thought of, but I knew what was coming once I dropped out of school. We ended up deciding on the Air Force, and six of us made the recruiter happy.

My folks were not nearly so happy. They wanted me to go to school and graduate from college. This was the last big argument my dad and I ever had, but I ended up telling them I was 18 and did not need their permission to go in the Air Force.

I dropped out of school after six weeks and went into the Air Force November 7, 1960. When I went through the Green Monster for a job, they gave me a number of choices: Weather Specialist, Radio Intercept Analyst (RIA), and something else, ending up with Cook School and Air Police. When I asked what

RIA was, they told me it was Radio Intercept Analysis and other than that, not much was known about the school.

I decided that was for me and spent the next 20 years at it. I loved the job and worked in the Fishbowl most of the time I was in the Air Force. I would not change the time spent, friends met, and beer drunk for anything

Andy Anderson
Sedro Wolley, Washington

From 1958 – 1963, I was dodging the draft as a "professional college student". I got a deferment for being in Divinity School in Carthage, Missouri for my freshman and sophomore years, followed up with three years at St. Thomas' College in St. Paul, Minnesota. I paid my own way by working as an orderly at St. Paul Children's Hospital.

Then in 1963, the Minneapolis Draft Board (Selective Service) sent me a "greetings" letter and scheduled me for a physical. I made the physical, and then headed for Seattle, Washington. From there, I sent my response to the Minnesota Draft Board, explaining that I was going to enroll in graduate school at the University of Washington.

Three months later, I got a letter back from the Minnesota Draft Board directing me to report to them in person within the next 30 days. So I high-tailed it back to Minnesota in September of 1963 and joined the Air Force so I wouldn't get drafted into the Army.

A final letter from the Minnesota Draft Board was forwarded to me while I was at Lackland for Basic Training. I gave it to the T.I. and heard nothing else. Little did I think I would spend the next 29-plus years in the Air Force.

Dennis "Rass" Rassmussen
Helotes, Texas

My motivation to join up was to get out of town. I grew up in a tiny little spot on the map called Trego, Wisconsin. I loved it there and spent all of my time hunting, fishing, and trapping. In the summertime, I swam every day in the Namekagon River. But I had itchy feet, and I wanted to go see the world.

In the spring of 1960, I went to Minneapolis to take my physical so I could join the Army. I flunked it! I was in super physical shape, but I had a tiny scar from an ulcer and an ingrown toenail. They stamped my papers “Draft Exempt – Do Not Recall.” I was officially 4F! That ticked me off. I wasn’t about to quit there.

I had my toenail taken care of then figured if I went to a different recruiting station and tried a different branch of the military, they wouldn’t find out about my 4F status.

In August of 1960, after working most of the summer, I went to Detroit to see my aunt and uncle. They showed me the sights and in the last week of the month, I decided it was time to go join the Navy and see the world. I even had a couple of Navy uniforms a friend had given me.

The day I went down to see the recruiter they were closed for the day. So I said, “To heck with them!” and went across the street to talk to the Air Force recruiter. I told him I wanted to be a radio operator. And the rest is history.

Jack Jakoubek
Chehalis, Washington

I graduated high school in 1966 and was due to turn 19 in January, 1967. Around here, the draft system was, shall we say, corrupt. If your parents weren’t well to do, when you turned 19, you were drafted while those of means never received the call.

I felt that by joining the Air Force, I would at least have some say over what I ended up doing. So I joined up and reported for Basic Training on January 18, 1967. I *still* received my draft notice while in Basic, but it was too late for them by then. I was wearing the blue and have never regretted it.

Richard Cooper
Searcy, Arkansas

I had made friends with my Air Force recruiter, and that turned out to be the thing that saved me from being a grunt. The recruiter, TSgt Brubaker, saved a spot for me after I received my draft notice, about 30 days after I graduated from college. I went in on the "delayed enlistment" program and was sworn in three days prior to my draft date. Whew!

Basic Training was very interesting. When we went to the Green Monster for the Morse code test, I wasn't very interested in catching dits, so I didn't try to answer correctly during the testing. I just randomly marked down answers, without paying attention. Afterward, when they were handing out assignments, they told me I had scored really high on the test. I think they must tell that to all of the guys who are tested. I was the only one in my flight to get selected for Keesler.

My lead Tactical Instructor (TI) was TSgt Bright (he wasn't). Being 6 ' 4" and skinny, I sort of stuck out like a sore thumb. He noticed me a lot. He didn't like the way I did push-ups and was always on my butt. He chewed on me while I was one of the squad leaders, and threatened to set me back. I put in many hours in the Day Room after lights out working on my proper push ups. The Sarge singled me out by calling me a "college boy", "smarty pants", etc. I just let it roll off my back and smiled. That really pissed him of.

Well, when all was said and done, and after we had the final exam, he called me into his office and started yelling, really loudly, and then he shut the door. Then he lowered his voice, and told me he was very proud of me, and that I had scored a perfect score on the testing. Then he raised his voice again, opened the door and told me to get my "sorry ass out of my office and never set foot in here again". Then he slammed the door.

I only spent four years in the Air Force, but it was four of the best years of my life.

Lee Hansel
Locust Grove, Georgia

I graduated from high school in 1959 and worked one year in the local hosiery mill. My job was mopping oil from underneath the knitting machines with huge rags. I was constantly getting needles in my fingers because the knitters would throw the old ones into the pan after they installed new needles in the machine. I knew I didn't want to make a career out of this, but it was all that was available.

Two friends and I talked to an Air Force recruiter and he told us we could enlist on the "buddy plan" and all stay together at least through Basic Training. With nothing better in our immediate future, we decided to go.

A lot of people said their recruiters lied to them, but I can't remember anything ours told us that was wrong. We took the oath on September 23, 1960 and were in Lackland the next day. I took all of the tests at Lackland and somehow passed the Morse code test.

I went on to Keesler for a period of time and then to Misawa. I had the opportunity to go TDY from Misawa to Da Nang, Vietnam. It was the only time I ever volunteered for anything during my time in the Air Force. I was told I would get two days for every one day served while I was in Vietnam. That would give me an early out, so I signed up. I never did figure it out, but I did get an early out of about 90 days.

I was discharged July 19, 1964 after having served almost four years. I knew I wasn't going to reenlist, it just wasn't what I felt comfortable doing for the rest of my life. But my time in the Air Force provided me with a chance to see things I would never have gotten to see, go to places I would never have gotten to go, and to meet some of the best people in the world. I don't regret one minute of the time I spent in the Air Force.

Although I didn't want to make a career of the Air Force, I have a son who is a lieutenant colonel and says he'll stay in as long as the Air Force will let him. He loves it. He's been in for 16 years now, and I guess he's going for at least 30.

Harold Amburn
Loudon, Tennessee

The 1970s

Born in 1949, I grew up on a potato farm in Hastings, Florida. My dad had been a Navy pilot in WWII, and was in the Naval Reserves all the years I was growing up. (We made our beds with hospital corners every morning!) Both my grandfathers had served in WWI and it seemed all the men relatives and farmers around Hastings had done military service, although I don't ever remember any of them discussing it.

I graduated from St. Augustine High School in 1967 and went to Florida State University, determined to be a teacher like my mother and grandmother. I didn't figure out the proper allocation of time for social and scholastic endeavors and flunked out.

I spent a year at the St. Johns River Junior College getting straightened out and back on track. Part of the problem was realizing I did not want to be a teacher and trying to figure out what looked interesting. And, there was a whole world opening up to women at that time. You didn't have to be a nurse, secretary, or teacher any more. And remember, as I was growing up, girls were learning cooking, sewing, child care, and the gambit of domestic skills because they were going to get married and that was their job.

I considered international affairs, hotel and restaurant management, and criminology. Criminology seemed more exciting and all the neat guys were in it. But, I still wasn't sure it was for me. There's a problem with having choices—you have to choose!

The political climate at the time: Boys I knew from high school were either drafted or enlisted in the military. There was a war going on in Vietnam. Every night, the evening news showed footage of what was going on, and it wasn't pretty.

On the college campus, there were endless debates about our involvement over there. It got kind of tiresome listening to the discussions, which were often just the parroting of things people had heard other people say, instead of carefully considered positions they held themselves.

I was still undecided about my future career, confused, tired of the anti-war talk, felt I needed a chance to step back and think

about things, so I joined the Air Force. I figured they would give me the structure I needed to get focused. Maybe I would be directed into a satisfying career, plus have the "safety net" of having my living expenses being taken care of by my favorite uncle.

I was also curious about what the boys were doing, and a bit of a fairness thing. They had to serve while women were exempted. And maybe I'd find a husband. I'm going for honesty here!

It was a good decision, although I didn't always realize it!

Helen Johns Henderson
St. Augustine, Florida

It was 1970 and I was a 19-year-old engineering student attending Youngstown State University in Ohio. I was always good in math, but calculus really kicked my butt. When I flunked it, I lost my exempt status and became 1A in the draft.

I held the number 63 in the lottery, which meant I was going to be drafted into the Army. With the war in Vietnam going on, I was determined to *not* go into the Army, so I enlisted in the Air Force. When I got out of the Air Force in 1974, I went back to Youngtown State on the G.I. Bill, got through calculus, and earned my Engineering Degree.

Joe Pakulniewicz
Ft. Wayne, Indiana

It was 1971 and I had two years of state college behind me in southern New Mexico. At 19 years old, I was ready to marry the young lady of my dreams, but I needed a decent job to get us started. I applied at all the local mines, which were the best jobs around that area at the time for an unskilled fellow like me. I soon realized that with my total lack of experience, I wasn't likely to be hired. I know now what a blessing that was!

I still needed an income to get married, so I decided to ignore the popular Arlo Guthrie songs of the time and join the Army. I

was interested in one of the Army's specialties listed as a psychiatric aid. I figured I could put those two years as a psychology major to good use. Wouldn't that have been an interesting and fun-filled job? But being honest about it, my asthma disqualified me for enlistment. I was told to come back in about a month, try again, and next time to not be so honest.

As Vietnam was going hot and heavy, I decided instead to join the Air Force, thinking it might be a tad safer. Of course, I ended up passing that dreaded Morse code test in Basic Training at Lackland, shipped off to Biloxi, and trained to become a ditty bopper in Security Service.

I ended up in Misawa where, I suppose I was able to put that psych-major to good use after all. What a crew we were!

Michael "Doc" Dunn

Somewhere Deep in the Jungles of Southern New Mexico

I was failing in college, had a borderline lottery number in the draft; couldn't face my parents about school, wanted to get married, and needed a job. So, I enlisted.

I got "Dear John'ed" in Basic Training and spent my entire enlistment mourning the loss. I had one date in four years... Oh well.

Randy Genthe

Kingwood, Texas

Just when you think you're going to go flying off a cliff, you notice there is an alternate route you can take. That is pretty much what happened to me.

I graduated and was stunned to discover I'd made it through all 12 years with a diploma in hand. There had never, ever been any discussion about college when I was growing up. My mother's idea of a professional job was a legal secretary.

I had been working for a Savings and Loan in Lewisville, Texas, my senior year and when I graduated, they offered me a

full-time position. I realized even at full time, the salary wouldn't pay enough for me to move out on my own and that was my one and only goal.

A week or so after graduation, I received a letter from an Air Force recruiter in Denton, Texas. I decided I'd investigate. The recruiter came to our home and explained everything in great detail. I was still 17, so one of my parents had to sign for me to even take the entrance exam. My Dad thought it would be a great experience for me and signed without batting an eye.

I've never done well on tests, even when I knew the material, so I wasn't hopeful that I'd do well but apparently, I did well enough. At that time, there was a *huge* influx of women going into the military, so I actually had to wait six months to enlist.

That summer I met a fellow and we started dating. Two weeks before I entered the service, he was killed in an auto accident.

After all these years down the road, I see that as horrible as that time was, the decision to join the Air Force and the timing of my entry couldn't have been more fortunate. I really don't think I could have handled staying in that town after that.

I'd like to say I was a patriot, but that wasn't the case. Like so many young folks, I was just looking for a way to "get out of town." I've got a healthy need to see what is on the other side of the hill and that experience only fueled that need.

Margaret Daberko
Pearland, Texas

My father was a professional photographer for the National Air Races, and in the late 1960s and early 1970s, we went to our share of air shows...mostly seeing them from the back seat of the family Nova while Dad was off taking photos.

I had my first plane ride before the age of 10. I shook hands with various Thunderbird pilots over the years and was hooked. It must have been something about a man in a blue uniform....hee, hee, hee. By the time I was a freshman in high school, I knew I wanted to join the Air Force. Everyone knew I was planning on joining; I just had to get through school first.

After graduation and the family summer vacation, I saw the recruiter and discovered I was 25 pounds overweight. I was determined to join the military, and it took me until April of 1973 to get the weight off.

My recruiter said I would be married before my first four years were up. I told him I wasn't joining the service to find a man. But, years later, I remembered his words. My enlistment started on 20 April 1973. Lew and I were married on 16 April 1977. My recruiter was right.

I have never regretted joining the military. Without the G.I. Bill, I never would have had the financial means to get my BBA. Without the military, I never would have traveled to foreign lands.

I am very proud to have had the honor of serving in the U.S. Air Force and meeting a lot of great men and women along the way.

God Bless America.

Terry Casey
San Angelo, Texas

After graduating from high school, I entered the University of Southern Louisiana (USL), now the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, in summer of 1965. As my father ran a full-service gas station, and I sure didn't want to do that all my life, I figured college was for me.

Shortly after entering USL, I had to take some kind of test to prove I was college material and not fodder for the draft. Whatever happened, I ended up getting out of USL in May 1970 with a BS in business and a draft number of 183.

The draft board lady said, "You will be in by August," so I went courting the Air Force. Since I was a college grad, I just knew I could be an officer, but all they were looking for were pilots and navigators. No way, as my eyes, hands, and feet didn't coordinate.

So I joined the enlisted corps of the Air Force, expecting a nice cushy office job since I had a degree in business. Well, as most of you know, the Air Force had other ideas about what I would do for them during my enlistment.

I got to Lackland and when we went to see about what was available for jobs, I sure didn't put down "ditty bopper". But lo and behold, I got my orders to report to Keesler in Biloxi.

I said to myself, "This can't be all bad, since it is only three hours from home and an hour from my girl friend's (now my wife) parent's home."

Ditty bopping and I didn't get along too well. It took me a while to get those 18.6's passed. After I got past that, I figured I could tell the Air Force where I wanted to go. Europe, of course. They said "No, you are going to Misawa, Japan."

I spent three years at Misawa, arriving single and leaving married, with a nine month honeymoon there. And I had no in-laws and no out-laws to worry about. I'm glad it happened that way, and wouldn't trade it for the world.

Jodie Cotton
New Roads, Louisiana

I served from 1972-1975. Born in 1954, I am the oldest of six kids, five of them girls.

My grandfather served in WW I, and my dad flew on B-17's in WW II with the Army Air Corps. Our family has always been strongly patriotic and proud of our military service.

As a child of parents who lived through The Depression, our lifestyle was never lavish. Discipline was severe, at least looking back from today's perspective. Church was mandatory and when anyone else's mom had to discipline us, we could count on being whipped all over again when we got back to our house.

Dad had his graduate degree from the University of Buffalo. Mom, as was common back then I think, went to secretarial school. They had a lot of fun, which resulted in a lot of babies.

I spent my early childhood in Elmira, NY. We had one car and a lot of snow. Mom stayed home with the kids, and I think she felt pretty burdened by all of us.

In 1966, we were transferred to Columbus, Ohio. I arrived there while I was in the 6th grade. I felt popular for about a minute, until it became obvious that the only reason kids were

talking to me was to get me to say words like "that, cat, hat" so they could laugh at my New York accent.

My family moved again, this time to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, the day after I graduated high school in June 1972. That summer, I ran around with the neighborhood kids, played tennis, and dreamed big dreams. On my birthday in August, my mom told me, "You're 18 and it's time you get a job and pay rent or move out."

I was not allowed to drive. My job skills were 9th grade typing, church organist, and babysitting. I was so upset...it seemed so unfair.

I walked over to the Air Force recruiter's office a few miles away in Penn Hills. Since we were new in town, I looked it up in the phone book and just went. The man saved my life. I can't remember his name, but he told me straight up what I'd be getting into.

I went home and told my parents I was going into the Air Force and I'd need them to drive me over to sign some papers. They were delighted. Mom thought, "You'll have to cut your hair and wear white underwear and they will make you behave." Dad remembered his service days fondly, so they thought it a good choice. I'd be out of their hair.

I was part of the first massive wave of women in the Air Force. I signed up in August, but couldn't get a billet until December because there was no room for me. Basic Training, after my time at home, was a piece of cake. I couldn't *imagine* why one of our WAF put a bag over her head and suffocated herself one night. Apparently, not everyone had the same family life as mine.

After doing some aptitude tests, we were called in toward the very end of Basic to talk about/be told our futures. I was asked what I thought about going to California (are you *kidding*?) and learning Russian. I went.

I loved the whole Tech School thing. First love, first concert, first beer. I remember much of my Russian to this day, which is a little scary in itself.

From there, it was on to Goodbuddy and Japan. Wow—what a ride.

I am proud to say that two of my sisters followed me into the Air Force, and both have the same powerful feelings about their

time served. On September 11, 2001 my little sister and I talked about how if you haven't served your country, you just really don't get it. And if you have, well, you'd be standing there crying, too.

Lydia Crooks
Arnold, Maryland

My father was a Lieutenant Colonel in the Air Force, so I had grown up around the military. I graduated from high school in Honolulu, Hawaii and attended college in Boise, Idaho. My father was the Deputy Base Commander at Mountain Home Air Force Base.

I was a terrible student. Then the draft lottery came and my number was 38. That was bad enough, but 38 was the lowest number in my Draft Board. Being a lousy student, I knew it was only a matter of time before I would lose my deferment. I joined the Air Force. I figured I would grow up somewhere along the line.

I was in Basic Training when I got called out to go to an interview for a particular job. As I sat down for the interview, the gentleman looked at my information and said, "Douglas Pearson, are you any relation to Lieutenant Colonel Karl Pearson who once severed in the Pentagon?"

My answer was, "Yes, he is my father."

That gentleman then said that he had worked with my father. My fate was sealed. I was going to be in the Security Service. After Basic Training, I went on to Keesler and then Goodfellow for training.

After the service, I did become a better student and received a BS in Business from Arizona State University and recently, I received my MBA in Marketing from the University of Phoenix.

When people ask me what I did in the service I still have fun telling them, "I can't tell you."

Doug Pearson
Yuma, Arizona

After I graduated from high school in 1969, I bummed around for a year, just really doing nothing. I had just done a year and a half in a military school run by retired Marines, so I knew for a fact that was one service I did *not* want to go into.

With my low draft number, I decided to not waste any more time and went into the Air Force. The only real bummer was during Basic Training, where I met this guy I had come up against in state level competition for woodwinds. He was going in as a musician and would be stationed in San Francisco after Basic as an Air Force musician with good promotion potential. I had not even thought of that route in the military.

Terry Forche
Huntington, Maryland

HONTO! The Unofficial History of the USAF Security Service at Misawa, Japan chronicles the early history of the 301st Intelligence Squadron currently serving in Northern Japan. The men and women who blazed the trail for that unit tell their stories.

HONTO!

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