

USAF Life Support/Flight Equipment Career Narrative

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USAF 1954-1983

Conflicts Served: The Korean War, the Cold War and the Vietnam Conflict

I was born and raised in Massachusetts. Graduated from high school in 1955. In November of 1954 I had joined the Air Force Reserve. In September of 1955, I joined the regular Air Force. Since I had been in the reserve, I was assigned to Lackland Air Force Base for 30 days training as a reenlisty. When I left Lackland, I was assigned to Chanute Air Force Base to be trained as a machinist. I completed machinist training in 1956. I was then trained as an instructor in the machine shop. Early in 1957 I was cross trained into what was then called personal equipment. After a short period of training, I was assigned as an instructor in personal equipment. I spent my next three years teaching all phases of personal equipment. In May of 1960 I was assigned to the 92nd TAC Fighter Squadron at R.A.F. Station, Bentwaters England. We were flying F101A and C models. I spent three years there. I was reassigned to Nellis Air Force Base in May of 1963. We had F100, F105, F4, C46 and two F86. While stationed there I finally put on SSgt. stripes. If you will remember this was a bad time for making stripes in our career field. In the fall of 1967, I was reassigned to Kirtland Air Force Base in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The unit was the 58th Weather Recon. Squadron, they were flying RB 57 F models and RB 57 C models. Most of the flying we did was high-altitude reconnaissance. During the time that I was assigned there I pulled a lot of TDY's. The main places we went were to Eielson Air Force Base in Alaska, Howard Air Force Base in Panama, and Mendoza Argentina. To list all the other TDY spots would take up more room than I want to use. I became tired of all the TDY's and made a lot of noise to get reassigned. I made just enough noise to get myself reassigned to Camron Bay Viet Nam. This was in September of 1970. We were flying O-2s, OV-10s and O-1 bird dogs. Since we had so many forward operating locations we had to fly out in the unit a/c to inspect our equipment. In September of 1971 I was reassigned to Davis Monthan Air Force Base in Tucson, Arizona. I was assigned to the USAF hospital at DM. The reason for this is because we were flying U-2 C&R model A/C. This was courtesy of the dreaded B at the end of our AFC. After one year and a half of high-altitude flying pressure suits and multiple TDYs, I was given the opportunity to volunteer for a very top-secret assignment. Wanting to get away from U-2s and pressure suits I jumped at the chance, only to find myself at Edwards Air Force Base with the U-2 R model. Can you believe that? After a year and a half assigned to Edwards Air Force Base and multiple TDYs. I was reassigned while TDY to Cyprus. Can you guess where I was reassigned to? You got it... Davis Monthan Air Force Base and the U-2 aircraft. After approximately another year and half I was reassigned again. This time they

doubled up on me not only did I travel with the U-2 to Beale Air Force Base but I was welcomed to the USAF hospital and the SR 71 high-altitude reconnaissance aircraft. . Sometimes I wish I was Irish. I sure didn't have any luck getting away from pressure suits. But there are brighter days ahead in May of 1980 after much finagling, I finally wound up with an assignment without any high-altitude aircraft I was assigned to work for Sandy Burrell at Nellis Air Force Base in Las Vegas, Nevada. I think Nellis had every fighter aircraft that was being flown at the time plus helicopters so I wasn't missing out on much, except for the high-altitude aircraft. I worked for Chief Burrell for several months until Chief Shields came in with the IG Team and did an inspection of the 57th Wing. After that inspection I was reassigned to the 57th wing as NCOIC of Life Support for the 57th Wing. I remained in that position until September of 1983 when I retired from the United States Air Force.

Two months prior to my retirement I went on terminal leave and started working for Northrop Grumman aircraft. I was working for Brian Lauffer and with Bob O'Bryan. At that time we were working on the F -5 aircraft and the F-20 program. A few years later we started work on the B-2 program. I spent my last five or six years working on the B-2 program. I retired from Northrup Grumman in 1995 after a mild heart attack. We decided when I retired we would purchase a motorhome and travel about the country. We did that for approximately 2 years until we settled down in Bunkerville, Nevada, which is about 75 miles northeast of Las Vegas. We have been here ever since lounging about and doing a little bit of traveling, especially when we go to the reunions.

Ed MacKenzie

P S During the time that I worked for Northrop I also did little work on 2 partial pressure suits that Northrup was looking into developing . Go figure

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PPS. I wanted to save the best for last. in 1958 I married Wilma Shinkle. We had three sons, Ed born in 1960, Michael born in 1961 and Greg born in 1964. We have been happily married for over 55 years. We hope to have many more anniversaries and go to many more reunions.