



Richard "AB" Coe



I came from an Air Force family and was fortunate enough to have lived in many different places in the U.S. and Europe, which helped to broaden my education. I went to pilot training at Laughlin AFB, TX since my dad had been the Base Commander there shortly before my USAFA graduation. Then it was off to war following in the footsteps of my father and brother.

I spent my first tour in Vietnam as a AC-119G gunship pilot, flying in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, while using my French language capability to work with the Cambodian military. I volunteered for a second tour in SEA flying F-4's at Korat RTAFB. During my second tour, I was the USAF Liaison Officer to the Seventh Fleet and flew with the U.S. Navy over North Vietnam. I logged over 900 combat hours and concluded my tours by shooting down a MiG-21 over North Vietnam. I became an F-4 instructor pilot in the 1st TFW and also spent time as the aide-de-camp to USCINCRAD. After attending the USNPS and DLI, I was the Assistant Air Attaché in Rome. I was able to fly with the Italian Air Force, and also had an interesting time working with the CIA because I was able to use my Chinese language ability to deal with members of the PLA before the U.S. and China had official relations. I flew F-15's for the next five years ending up as the Commander of the 5th FIS. I retired from the Air Force as the Chief of the Weapons Systems Branch, XOOTT.

The next 17 years were as a Delta Air Lines pilot and Chief of legal and contracts for the Delta pilots. After a career of flying 20 different airplanes and fighters, I retired again, taught in the Florida university system and then became the EVP/COO of the U.S. Ski and Snowboard Association, the organization that trains and sends skiers and snowboarders to the Olympics. After three Olympics, I retired to start a foundation to get kids on the snow in the winter, the National Winter Sports Education Foundation. It was important to give back my time and effort to help the next generation succeed in life.

The friends I made from USAFA and pilot training are still my friends today. Those friends had my "6" throughout life and I've returned the favor. That camaraderie was born out of our shared professionalism - while still having fun. Most of all, remember to have as much fun as you can in life. "AB" was the nickname I was given at USAFA because even then I had fun!