Darrel R. Knutson

I was born on a farm in northern Minnesota and raised in Kenosha WI. I enlisted in the Air Force on November 13, 1962. After basic training at Lackland AFB, TX I went through Flight Simulator Repair School at Chanute AFB IL, training on the USAF's first digital computer. At graduation I was assigned to the second USAF Preparatory School class of 1964. There I received an Air Force enlisted appointment to the 10th Academy class. I was in CS-5 where I was the oldest cadet in the squadron. I graduated from CS-15 with a degree in Political Science on June 5, 1968 and was married the next day.

Pilot training at Vance AFB OK gave me an assignment to AC-47s that was changed to C-141's. After Altus AFB, OK, I arrived at the 30th MAW, McGuire AFB, NJ on Nov 23. 1969, 7 years and 10 days of continuous training. During the next 10 months I accrued almost 900 hours including at least one trip to VietNam every month. Returning from SEA in early Oct 1970 I received orders to helicopter training at Shephard AFB, TX then HH-53 "Super Jolly Green" combat rescue training at Eglin AFB FL. In the 37th ARRS flying out of DaNang AB, RVN I amassed almost 400 hours over South and North Vietnam, Cambodia and Thialand. During 4 actual combat resce missions I was credited with two saves. Leaving RVN in May 1972 I declined an assignment to C-5A's asd went to the 67th ARRS RAF Woodbridge, UK. My last task there was to control the implementation of the squadron Mobility Plan which I had written. It resulted in placing 4 fully armed helicopters in 96 hours off the beach in Lebanon when the US Marines landed to extradite the American Embassy in June 1976. My last flight before PCSing was to save the life of the unborn child of the munitions officer who helped make it happen.
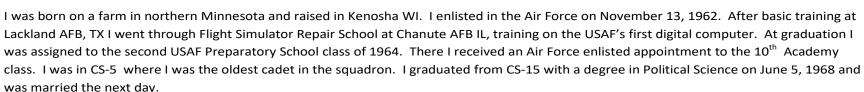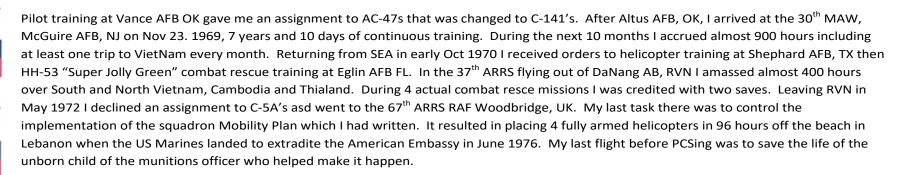
A rated supplement assignment to Hq SAC, Offutt AFB, NE as a programmer, then systems analyst and manager in the National Warning System was next. I was the only Captain Branch Chief in the Computer Directorate. I escaped back to combat rescue in Jan 1980 as Operations officer then Commander of Det 6, 40 ARRS Holloman AFB, NM. There I was involved in developing the Space Shuttle rescue plan and the landing at White Sands NM. Assigned as the helicopter Advisor to the Saudi Arabian Air Force I spent all of 1983 in Taif SA. Declining a by name request assignment to the Pentagon I was assigned to Software Evaluation at the Air Force Operational Test & Evaluation Center, Kirtland AFB, NM. Decisions should be made based on what is important to you, not promotion opportunities. I retired in Oct 1988, 13 days short of 26 years of service. During that time I obtained a Batchelor's degree, 2 Master's Degrees and completed the Squadron Officers School, Air War College and National Security Management courses as well as both pilot and helicopter pilot training with a Commercial Pilot's License.

After retirement I worked as a computer systems analyst, licensed insurance and securites agent, college professor and obtained my third Master's Degree to become a licensed mental health counselor. I live in Albuquerque with my present wife of over 20 years.

If you can have half as much fun during your service and life as I have had, you are in for one delightful and enjoyable life.