



Richard J. Patterson



I was born in St. Joseph and raised in St. Louis, Missouri. I went through the University City school system and graduated from U City High in June 1964. I entered the Air Force Academy on June 30, 1964 in CS-4 (Fightin' Fourth). In the "Second Class Shuffle" I went to CS-22 where I graduated. I entered pilot training at Vance AFB, OK and was awarded my wings as a member of Class 70-01.

I picked the C-7A Caribou because it was used only in Vietnam and hoped to get a "better" plane when I returned Stateside. Upgrade training was at Dyess AFB, TX - on 30 Nov 1969 I entered Vietnam at Da Nang AB and flew out of Phu Cat AB.

On 26 Dec 1969 I flew from Phu Cat to Chu Li AB. I was on a training flight with a Flight Examiner and changed planes because a classmate was on a check ride. I became the co-pilot of a plane with an IP. We were carrying 155mm howitzer ammunition, and in the final turn at Tien Phuc AB, an AK-47 bullet hit the IP/AC and we crashed. The crash killed him and the flight engineer. I was the only survivor but still was wounded very seriously. The site had a sharp US Army controller - he saved my life. He saw we were going to crash and dispatched a truck to pick us up. A helicopter airlifted me to Chu Li hospital (the first of several I was in over the next six months).

I convinced a doctor at Wright-Patterson AFB hospital that I wanted to remain in the AF, so he discharged me and I went to Travis AFB, CA as a 60 MAW operations officer. There I worked my way up to be the 60 MAW Barrel-Master - I was in charge of 15 (brand new) C-5As, 42 C-141s and a few C-133s. I still tried to get back on flight status - even wrote a letter to the AF Surgeon General - who said I never would fly in the AF again.

My first non-rated job was at Air Weather Service, Scott AFB, IL. I was program manager for the Airborne Weather Reconnaissance System and also responsible for a squadron of RB-57F Long Wing aircraft.

I got my MSEE through AFIT and spent some time in a Radar Evaluation squadron (Hill AFB, UT) before I was selected to Command the 2063 Communications Sq., Wiesbaden AB, FRG. I spend two years there and had a Top-Secret clearance (among others). The clearances helped me become the Chief of Communications, NATO E-3A Program Management Agency (Brunssum, The Netherlands), where we managed the NATO acquisition of the E-3A. That was in a SKIF outside of DC, so I retired in the DC area and now live near Winchester, VA.

I had a lot of exciting and different jobs and responsibilities in my career and I hope yours is as varied and fulfilling as mine.