



Edwin A. Thomas

My father served as a Navy aviation mechanic during WWII, and I was born in the Naval Hospital, Norfolk Virginia. I attended grade school in New Jersey and high school in Pennsylvania. J. Irving Whalley, 12 Congressional District of Pennsylvania, nominated me for the class of 1968. CS-3 was my home for the first two years, then CS-15 until graduation.

I attended Purdue University where I earned a masters degree in Aeronautics and Astronautics. Because I was unable to pass the eye exam for pilot training, I attended Navigator and Electronic Warfare School at Mather AFB, CA. My first operational assignment was in the F-105F/G, Wild Weasel, Korat AB, Thailand, 1970-71, where I completed 125 combat missions in North Vietnam. I was then reassigned to the F-4E as a Weapon Systems Officer at Torrejon AB, Spain and Incirlik AB, Turkey, 1971-73.

Along with others with extensive back-seat fighter experience, I was granted a waiver of the eye requirement and completed pilot training at Williams AFB, AZ, in 1974. I flew the A-7D at Davis-Monthan AFB, Tucson, AZ and England AFB, LA, becoming an instructor pilot and serving as captain of the team that won the Royal Air Force tactical bombing competition in 1978. I was accepted for experimental test pilot training at Edwards AFB, CA and completed the course in July 1979 as a distinguished graduate. During six additional years at the Air Force Flight Test Center, I flew the T-38, A-7, F-4 and tested early versions of the F-16A/B. From 1982 until 1985 I was deputy director, then director of the F-16XL Combined Test Force.

I attended the National War College in 1985 and was subsequently reassigned to HQ USAF in the Pentagon as chief of tactical modernization and later as deputy chief of the fighter division. I pinned on my colonel's eagles on May 1, 1988. My escape from the puzzle palace occurred in January 1989 when I was offered the position of Vice Commander of the 3246th Test Wing, Munitions Systems Division, at Eglin AFB, FL.

I retired from the USAF in December 1991 after 23 years of service and went on to two more careers: one flying for a major airline based in Chicago, DC-10, A-320 and B-757/767; and finally as a community college professor until I reached age 70. I've always loved my work, and as a result, I can say I feel I've never worked a day in my life. Keep your speed up and don't forget to **check six!**