

To Cadet Jeffrey B Weingast

18 Apr 2018

Hi Jeff, It is nice to meet you and I congratulate you in your gradation in the Class of 2018! Let me tell you of my career and a few words of fighter pilot wisdom! You can take that any way you want, sometimes, but not many, fighter pilots don't have all the facts! HA!!

I am Jack Webb, Class of 1968. I was born in Fairbanks, Alaska and took my first flight in Oct 1945 at the age of about 7 days from Fairbanks to Nome Alaska. In Nome, my parents were the Station Managers for a small bush pilot airline and we lived in the apartment over the office/bunkhouse for overnighing pilots. The pilots were my friends, therefore I stowed away at age 4 so I could fly to Fairbanks with some friendly pilots! My life in Nome engrained in me a love of flying.

I grew up in Fairbanks and attended the University of Alaska, in Fairbanks. I was selected to attend the Air Force Academy, starting in June 1964. I obtained a double major at the Academy in Economics and Engineering Management. My true love was flying at the Aero Club where I quickly earned my powered aircraft private license. Then I found the Soaring Club and it was love at first sight. In 1968 I was the first cadet to obtain a Diamond Altitude award flying to over 30,000 ft. To top it off, I was on restrictions at that time but had a sympathetic AOC (Air Officer Commanding) who authorized me to include the airfield in my restriction access. 20 years later, I again met that AOC, who was then a 3-star general at the Pentagon, and he still remembered that flight but thankfully he forgot about the restrictions! Lesson: don't make enemies, they may rise to high places and be your boss!

I planned on UPT (Undergraduate Pilot Training) until I went to my flight surgeon and he announced my eyes were borderline for pilot training, and "we really have too many pilots right now!" The old saying of "keep your sense of humor" took over and off I went to UNT (Undergraduate Navigator Training) in California. I selected a WSO (Weapon System Officer, also known as a Plumber!) slot in the F-4 Phantom on a direct path to the war in Vietnam. However, via the Tampa Tribune Newspaper, I learned my class of navigators and our instructor pilots were reassigned to Alaska. Obviously going home was not my first choice; again a sense of humor helps. I was selected to attend Squadron Officer's School in residence and broadened my horizon as to Air Force missions and learned being a fighter pilot was not the "be all and end all" of the Air Force. Lesson: you can never get enough education!

After three years in Alaska, I was selected for UPT and selected the F-106. After three years in the cold North of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan and earning a MS degree in my "spare time", I went to Maintenance Officers School and returned to take over the Quality Control section in Maintenance but stay fully qualified in the F-106. I loved that job and my Senior NCOs taught me way more than any other school did. However, luck stepped in when Tactical Air Command needed a pilot with F-4 experienced as an Exchange officer with the Royal Air Force in the UK. I threw in my hat and was surprised that my navigator's hours in the Phantom, plus being a pilot got me the assignment. While heading to training, the RAF decided that the exchange officer had to have 70 pilot hours in the aircraft. The assignment was saved by an old friend from Alaska Phantoms that was the F-4 wing training officer. He refused to cancel the assignment while I was traveling and convinced the wing commander to put me in a complete upgrade program that gave me 70 hours in the Phantom. Lesson: never forget old friends.

Then it was off to the UK to begin one of the most challenging, interesting and fun assignments in my life. Soaring came back into my life as there was a glider club directly behind my house on base! I went to the UK Glider Instructor course and flew my 5-hour duration flight and did lots of cross country flying in exotic gliders! My four years there culminated in my winning the top gun award for air to air gunnery at RAF Akrotiri in Cyprus. But, even better were TDYs all over Europe; and best were the Soviet Bombers and naval shipping I was able to intercept and identify. A great Assignment.

Leaving the UK, I went to Air Command and Staff College and left as an outstanding graduate with an hardship assignment to 6 ATAF Izmir Turkey. And, again, surprise, I loved the job and the people. After many 1 AM telephone calls to MPC (Military Personnel Center) and friends, I was assigned to New York in the last active duty F-106 squadron as the Assistant Ops Officer and then the Operations Officer. I would be remiss if I did not mention that at this assignment I found the love of my life! Of course we met at the Officers Club bar as she was in the USAF in Public Affairs at another unit on base. Her love of life and travel and adventure blended with my life.

After making Lt Col, I was selected for Air War College in residence and left my F-106, not knowing that was the last flying I would do in the USAF. After three residence courses at Maxwell, I was more than ready to leave and found myself at the one place I had been dreading: the Pentagon. Again, surprise, I loved it there and had a great assignment working in plans for the Middle East. My wife and I were living together again but, after three years, the USAF wanted to separate us again, so it was time to move on.

Another surprise, after going 22 years ignoring the siren call of the commercial airlines, I decided that this was the perfect job to follow my military wife around and still live together. I retired in 1990 and was hired by Continental Airlines to fly the 727 and DC 10 as a flight engineer. Eventually we moved to Guam, where my wife was the Chief of Public Affairs and I was a flight engineer in the 727 wandering the Far East. We both love to travel and scuba dive, so it was a perfect assignment.

After four years in Guam, we went back to Washington, DC where I upgraded to First Officer in the 757 and 767-300/ 400. We bought a sailboat; my wife worked at Armed Forces Radio and Television; and I played at my airline flying but worked to refurbish our sailboat for our next adventure. My wife retired in 1999 and in 2001 I took a leave of absence and we were off to the Caribbean in our boat. We loved it but the airline needed me back so we sailed to Houston, Texas and lived on the boat while I flew my least-liked airplane, the 737. After a year, I retired early to do full time sailing. Lesson: I am happy I stayed in the USAF where flying is demanding but fun. The only thing good about commercial flying is the money, but it was boring! The only flying I think about today is glider flying!

In 2004 I sailed across the Atlantic from Florida to Bermuda, to Azores, to Lisbon, Portugal with my wife bringing parts to all the stopping places. Here I also finished our book: "True North in Alaska," about the lives of my parents going to Alaska in 1937 and teaching in the villages and moving to Nome and Fairbanks. It was a labor of love!

We then sailed south to Trinidad and then through Venezuela and dodged pirates until we got to Bonaire, Curacao and Aruba. Then it was off to Colombia, which had been cleared of the drug traffickers, and spent time in Cartagena before we left for Panama and on through the Panama Canal. In the Pacific, we headed to Costa Rica; where we shipped our boat, bypassing the drug violence in Mexico,

and picked her up in British Columbia; where, eventually, we put her up for sale. After 16 years living on the sailboat, it was time to move to another adventure.

Our first move was to buy a travel trailer in Alaska and we began spending our summers in Alaska. We also bought a house in Greencastle PA (near my wife's hometown). We quickly realized Pennsylvania was too cold so we bought a 5th wheel RV which we now keep in the south of the USA and wander wherever it is warm in the winter. PA is only for spring and fall weather!

This leads us to today and the gifting of this sabre to you! I learned at the Academy to always keep your sense of humor; always be ready for change and know that no matter what the assignment, do it to the best of your ability and be ready to move on. Have fun in your career and be sure to keep in touch if you ever want to chat, go gliding, see Alaska, etc, etc. Remember, Have fun!!!

Jack Webb

Lt Col, USAF Retired
PO Box 503, Greencastle, PA 17225
wan703-980-3636
deringwebbs2@cs.com

Navigator, pilot, sailor, author, diver, genealogist, general contractor, electrician, plumber and wanderer of the world. (PS: once a plumber, always a plumber!)