



Civilian

William B. Wood

“Wooder”



BS – MA – MS
PMP

As the second son of a career AF officer, I grew up in a dozen locations including Japan and Okinawa. I left home at age 16 to get the education that I correctly calculated would allow me to attend USAFA via a Presidential appointment. While I intended to have a full AF career, I washed out of pilot training with a “hyper-sensitive” inner ear and turned to flying satellites for what turned out to be four years in the AF, and then extending my love of space and computers for another 35 plus years within Hughes Aircraft Company, which evolved into Raytheon Company. I retired from Raytheon as a Sr. Program Manager.

Although I graduated in the top third of the incredible Class of 1968, my intended AF career evaporated due to a combination of bad luck, sub-par senior officers, and a few short-sighted decisions on my own part. Despite those unfortunate circumstances, I would not say that I failed in my career, because as I realized over time my most important life goals have all been achieved. I made it through the Academy successfully with strong friendships that continue to this day, and was able to work with individuals of similar caliber and quality throughout my industry activities. I parleyed my AF weather satellite experience into working black programs most of my career, and justified the extra time and efforts they took with the satisfaction about their importance to the nation. Most importantly, as I realized along the way, I’ve had a wonderful life of 50 years with a unique woman who I’ve always loved, actively raised and coached four successful and happy children, and I continue to practice my faith. Also, despite the lack of a service pension, we’re financially solid and able to help our children and grandchildren on occasion.

On top of my work and family, I earned several Masters degrees, graduated from the DAU’s Program Manager’s Course, and developed and taught SE graduate level programs at both the University of Colorado at Denver and presently at Colorado State University, as well as other professional and technical training courses in industry. I was a Distinguished Graduate of the AF Orbital Analyst School, earned a Project Management Professional (PMP) designation from the Project Management Institute, and had over 2,000 hrs of additional training. I was also very honored to have been able to make presentations to USAFA Astro and Systems Engineering classes over a number of years.

It hasn’t always been easy. It hasn’t always been fun. It has been immensely, immensely satisfying!

What take-aways do I offer to you with this saber? *First*, as the actor Jack Palance so tersely put it while playing the character “Curly” in the movie City Slickers: **“1 Thing”**. There is only one *most* important thing in your life. You can work to achieve many things, but success in your 1 Thing is what really matters. You may not even yet really know what your “1” is – but you will; over time. And you will be satisfied only if you follow its direction. *Second*, you can do things as a military officer that you can not do in any other position. You should recognize those possibilities in deciding if you stay in or “leave early.” You must also acknowledge and actively mitigate the costs for everyone involved for whichever you decide to do. *Third*, Integrity is the most important fundamental characteristic that you can ever have. It will ensure righteousness in what you do and how you do it, equitable treatment of all, and respect from others that can provide invaluable professional support and mutual protection. *Fourth*, “MAN’S FLIGHT THROUGH LIFE IS SUSTAINED BY THE POWER OF HIS KNOWLEDGE”, to which I would add “...AND EFFORT.” Necessity and desire are great motivators and will drive you to do things you aren’t otherwise equipped or prepared to do. *Fifth*, Luck’s fickle – you may get more or less than you deserve. Your response to bad luck is as important as it is to good luck. Bad luck also may be better than you recognize at the time; and good luck not so much. It’s up to you to make the most of your luck.

I pass this saber to you as a symbol of what you’ve learned, overcome and achieved - so far. May it harbinger your continued growth and contributions, and remind you of your abilities and potential, as it has for many who have come before you, as well as those who will follow.