



Richard E Kells Dick

I grew up in upstate New York, graduating from high school in Massena, NY. My initial interest in aviation stemmed from my father's service as B-17 crew member during World War 2. When I was in junior high school, I was so impressed by a news report I saw about the first graduating class at the U.S. Air Force Academy that I established attending the Academy and becoming an Air Force pilot as my life goals. Ironically, despite my professed interest in a flying career, my first flight in an airplane was the trip to Colorado Springs for Basic Cadet Training!

My first two years at USAFA were in CS-13 and then CS-22 for the last two years. Among the highlights of my cadet experience was the opportunity to spend Operation Third Lieutenant at Korat RTAFB, Thailand, observing first-hand our airmen supporting the F-105 Thunderchief flying combat missions into North Vietnam.

Upon graduation from the Academy, I attended pilot training at Craig AFB, near Selma, Alabama. I then transitioned into the C-130 Hercules and was assigned to Dyess AFB, Abilene, Texas, where I participated in numerous rotational deployments and tactical exercises, progressing from copilot to aircraft commander and instructor pilot. Abilene is also where I met and married my wife, Dee Dee, who provided immeasurable support throughout my active duty and post-retirement careers and nurtured our two sons during their formative years.

After completing a Master's degree in Logistics Management at AFIT in 1977, I was assigned to the aerial port at McGuire AFB, NJ, followed by a tour as commander of an air terminal operations detachment in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. I next returned to C-130 instructor pilot duties at Little Rock AFB, Arkansas. I subsequently completed Air Command and Staff College at Maxwell AFB, followed by assignment as a Logistics Plans Officer in U.S. Central Command at MacDill AFB, Florida. My final active duty station was Pope AFB, NC, where I returned to flying the C-130 and then served as Transportation Squadron commander and Deputy Commander of the Combat Support Group. I retired in 1990 after Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm.

In retirement I worked for defense contractors supporting the Special Operations community and USCENTCOM, including two one-year tours in the Middle East on antiterrorism and force protection programs. My final working years were as an Acquisition officer for communications and information systems supporting Army and joint special operations. Full retirement in Fayetteville, NC, has allowed more time for grandchildren, volunteer activities, and recreation.

I'll always be grateful for the foundation the Academy experience provided and for the many opportunities and great people I encountered during my Air Force career. I have few regrets and, given the opportunity, would do most of the same things again. As I pass this saber to you, I wish you the very best and offer a couple of thoughts. You've already achieved great things by being accepted at the Academy and fulfilling requirements for graduation, but try to remain humble and don't take yourself too seriously. And finally, remember that "flexibility is the key to air power!" Aim High!