

In the winter of 1960, I was just a farm boy working down at the factory as a tool and die maker apprentice and taking classes after work. The company manufactured light bulbs, electric meters, and appliances but its stated most important product was progress. Life was good. I was unencumbered and living in fat city. Then in May *the* letter arrived. Everyone must remember *the* letter from Major General W. S. Stone offering the recipient an appointment to the United States Air Force Academy as a member of the Class of 1964.

The letter also contained cautions about what would be expected if the candidate accepted the appointment. General Stone stressed that it would be rigorous training and that it would be necessary to conform to a new way of life. I was just a hayseed who had never been in an airplane, and now I was being offered an education and an opportunity to fly jets. How tough could it be? Little did I know that accepting the appointment would be the best decision that I would ever make because I would get to serve with that stalwart group of men, USAFA Class of 1964. General Stone's cautions became reality and how tough it could be was answered when the bus deposited a group of us at in-processing on June 27, 1960.

The four years at the Academy and my time on active duty flew by with the blink of an eye, and there was much of this great country traversed which instilled a sense of its vastness and beauty.

USAFA to Craig AFB Selma, AL 1964	UPT T-37/T-33
Craig AFB to Perrin AFB Sherman, TX 1965	Interceptor Lead-in F-102
Perrin AFB to Tyndall AFB Panama City, FL 1966	Crew Qualification F-101
Tyndall AFB to Kingsley Field Klamath Falls, OR 1966	Pilot F-101 322nd FIS
Kingsley Filed to Shaw AFB Sumter, SC 1967	Reconnaissance Qualification RF-101
Shaw AFB to Tan Son Nhut AB RVN 1968	Pilot RF-101 Det 1, 45th TRS
Tan Son Nhut to Shaw AFB Sumter, SC 1969	Instructor Pilot RF-101/Pilot RF-4 31st TRTS/18th TRS
Shaw AFB to Georgia Tech Atlanta, GA 1971	AFIT
Georgia Tech to Peterson Field Colorado Springs, CO 1973	HQ ADC
Peterson Field to Vernon Hills, IL 1976	Feather Merchant

While at Hq ADC, I also flew the T-39 as Pilot/Instructor pilot as an extra duty and to occasionally get out from behind a desk. My final active duty flight was an occasion with a little notoriety associated with it. I was scheduled to have a short flight west and back, but the night before, the scheduler called and asked if I would switch flights because General James was flying to Florida and that required an IP, and they had no other IP available that day. Why not? When I arrived at Base OPS the flight order called for a flight From Peterson Field to Jacksonville NAS with an intermediate stop at New Orleans NAS. Piece of cake!

The flight was going along very smoothly until the wheels kissed the runway at Navy JAX. There was an immediate uproar from the cabin that should have melted the walls. In seconds this was followed by a fire breathing general informing us that this was not the destination he wanted. Oops! There must have been a communication problem between NORAD and MAC.

After the General had explained the situation to the brass waiting to greet him at Navy JAX, we rectified the problem and delivered him to the Air National Guard side of the field at Jacksonville International Airport where he really wanted to be. Even with the unplanned diversion we were still ahead of schedule. Before General James deplaned, he thanked us and apologized for his displeasure. My young copilot was suffering a thousand deaths during this whole adventure with visions of his career and wings flying out the window. I told him not to worry and that this was the end of it. The flight back to Peterson Field was uneventful.

The rest of the story. That night on the local TV news the lead story was concerning the report that General James, the Commander of NORAD who is responsible for tracking every object in space, landed at the wrong airport. Fortunately the intrepid TV news readers did not try to find the pilots. The question to this day is was it someone from Navy JAX or someone from MAC at Scott AFB who leaked the story to the TV station. That was the last that was ever heard about the incident.

Mother always said that I was lucky, and we all know that mothers are always right. I was lucky to have been born in America to parents who loved and guided me through my knuckle head years; I was lucky to have been appointed to USAFA Class of 1964; I was lucky to have been allowed to serve in the greatest Armed Forces on God's Green Earth; and I was lucky to have met Henrietta my best friend and love of my life.

When the last flight has been logged and the cah has been pahked in Havahd Yahd one last time, I will wing my way home to the Ramparts with the enduring memory that I got to train and serve with that stalwart group of men, USAFA Class of 1964.