

My AIR FORCE YEARS

- Officer Time

– LARRY’S SHORT STORIES #129 –

The ending of one adventure often means the start of another; such was certainly the case with my Air Force years. On 19 July 1974, at Blytheville AFB, AR, Brenda removed the sergeant stripes from my dress shirts and pinned on the gold bars of a 2nd lieutenant; off I went to Medical Service School at Shepherd AFB in Wichita Falls, TX to study Hospital Administration. This was a three-year, direct commission.

Brenda had delivered our son Russell just a few days earlier, July 15, so I left the two of them with our good friends John and Mary Baregi and family - and went to Texas alone. The following weekend I flew back, hooked our '64 Ford behind our '72 Plymouth and the family headed south.

Nearly through the 90 day training program, my orders came in directing me to report to the Ellsworth AFB Hospital, near Rapid City, SD -- when the training was complete. A letter from Major Tim Bargamin (my boss to be), advised that he would assign me to the Squadron Commander position. That sounds like a 'high up' job, but it was just the Air Force saying Human Resources Manager. Later, I served as the Medical Supply Officer, where I learned a little about logistics.



Pinning the gold

Sgt. Larry Potterfield will trade his three stripes for gold bars Sunday and his wife, Brenda, helps him try the second lieutenant insignia on for size. Sergeant Potterfield will become a medical service officer and be reassigned to South Dakota. (U. S. Air Force Photo)

Brenda pinning on the 2nd Lieutenant bars. It's a pretty big deal when an enlisted troop receives a commission, so they wrote it up in the base paper.

The assignment couldn't have been better. The Hospital Squadron was about 350 soldiers, and all were top notch. From the doctors, nurses and administrators to the maintenance folks and cooks; everyone worked together as a team. My boss had a motor home and a boat – and liked to hunt. I had decoys and knew how to blow a duck call. There was lots of hunting and fishing, and shooting – including skeet and prairie dogs.



This is my official commissioning photo from July 1974.

One afternoon in June of 1976, Brenda and I found ourselves in the hospital delivery room, with doctors and nurses that we both knew and socialized with; Sara, child #2, was delivered. With a new baby in our lives, and being near Mt. Rushmore and the Black Hills, we had lots of visitors, and made the long trip back to Missouri only a couple of times each year.

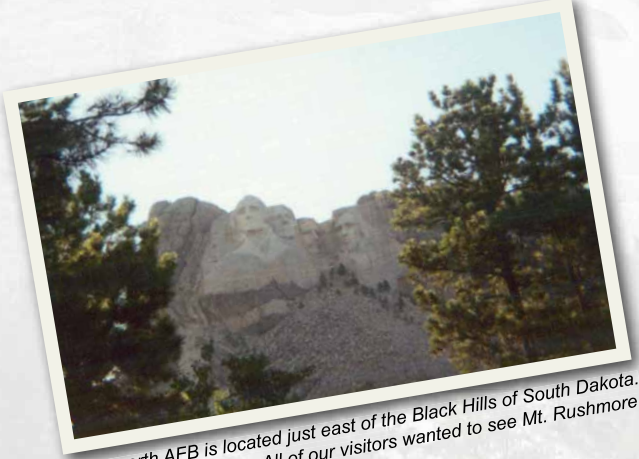
"The assignment couldn't have been better."

When my three years of commissioned time was up, the moving truck came and went; our family of four loaded into the car, stopped by base headquarters to sign out for the last time and headed home to Missouri (with 60 days of paid leave) – one adventure ending, while another – the gun shop, was about to begin.



Larry Potterfield

Hospital Squadron
Ellsworth Air Force Base
Rapid City, South Dakota
13 May 1977



Ellsworth AFB is located just east of the Black Hills of South Dakota. All of our visitors wanted to see Mt. Rushmore.