

My AIR FORCE YEARS

Enlisted Time

– LARRY'S SHORT STORIES #112 –

The adventure started in December of '69, when the Selective Service folks announced my draft number (#121) on national television. I was a junior in college, with a student deferment, so wouldn't be called up till the fall of '71.

My immediate future pre-determined, I didn't interview for a job after graduation, turned down a Navy commission and enlisted in the Air Force – after being promised that they would offer me a commission during Basic Training – sure!

Basic Training was an unforgettable experience – Flight #1461; formations, drills, exercise, a little shooting; it was all pretty routine for a country kid. Interestingly, my squad leader washed out the first week and I moved up, then our dorm chief left during the

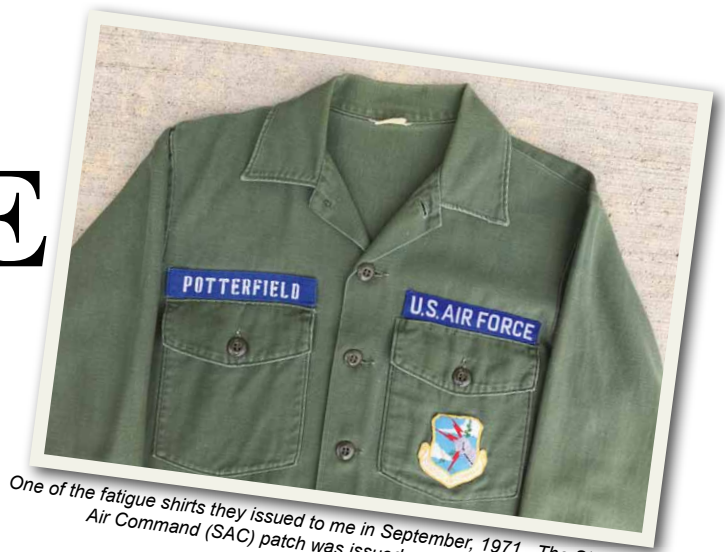


One of the primary missions of the Air Force was the B-52 strategic bombers.

second week and I got his job; they must have liked my confidence in calling out drill commands. About half-way through Basic, they offered a bypass specialist test, which allowed for bypassing technical training school. I passed the Accounting test and then got the base of my choice – Blytheville AFB, Arkansas close to Brenda's hometown, where she was still in college.

We could register a desired assignment with base personnel, so I immediately volunteered for Alaska; but when the orders finally came I declined, as it would have required an extension.

In late 1973, the Air Force began to downsize. I could get out immediately, trading each remaining year of active duty for two years in the reserves. This seemed like a good deal, so I went to Personnel and signed up. However,



One of the fatigue shirts they issued to me in September, 1971. The Strategic Air Command (SAC) patch was issued at Blytheville AFB, Arkansas.

the reserve unit was six hours away, Brenda's teaching contract couldn't be ended early and the accounting job I found locally paid less than I was making as an E-4. After gathering these facts, I didn't like the deal; the orders were cancelled and I remained on active duty.

There was a direct commissioning program in Hospital Administration that I first applied for in

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the fall of '71. The first 'decline' letter included a note that most of those chosen had masters degrees, so I enrolled in an on-base 'Masters in Business Management' program – four nights a week from 6-9. In March of '74, as I was completing the program, the acceptance came through for the direct commission. On 19 July, 1974, I pinned on the bars and my enlisted years were over – 2 years and ten months – what an adventure!



Larry Potterfield

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The local newspaper took this picture and interviewed us, when Brenda and I moved to Steele, Missouri in November of 1973.