

Airman Second Class Elton L. Blanchard  
416<sup>th</sup> Fighter Bomber Squadron  
Chambley Air Base France 1956 to 1958



It was June 15, 1955. I was just out of high school. I did not have a job so I thought about the Army but they live in a pup tent that left them out. The Navy no I did not want to live on a ship at sea for four years. So the Air Force was the place for me. So on June 30<sup>th</sup>, 1955 I was sworn in and they gave me a pass and told me to be at Logan Airport in Boston,

Massachusetts on July 5<sup>th</sup>, 1955 where I would be flown to Sampson Air Force Base in Geneva, New York for basics training.

No need to write about that place all I can say if after 3 days some one told me I could leave I would have run for the gate.



Sampson Air Force Base Geneva, New York on the Finger Lakes in the 1950's

I was sent to technical training school at Chanute Air Force Base in Illinois to become a Hydraulics Specialist and around the end of April 1956 I arrive at Chambley Air Base, France to begin my 3 year tour.

When I arrived at Chambley, the 21st Fighter Bomber Wing was on temporary duty to Wheelus Field Tripoli, Libya, North Africa. I was



assigned to the 416<sup>th</sup> Fighter Bomber Squadron and told to report to the hangar every day for duty where I received a lot of “make work” till the wing returned.

After the wing returned it became a different story I got to do the work I was trained to do. I worked for SSGT Franklin Ducker and received the best on-the-job-training that anyone could want.

I did not leave the base for a month or two after I arrived because I could not speak French and was leery to go to town alone. After the wing returned and I made a few friends it was off to Metz, France where I would go to have a good time. It was at one of these “Good Times” when we had gone to Metz and we were a long way from the train station. Somehow we became separated and I found myself lost. I walked up and down the streets of Metz looking for the train station. I would ask people as they walked by where the train station was located. They would look at me and keep walking. I was thinking that I would never find the station. I was very careful how I approached people especially the women. I did not want one of them to call the French Police and complain about me. Just when I was about to give up I saw a young woman about to pass me and I said, “Excuse me, could you tell where the train station is located?” She answered in English “I’m going that way I can show you!” When we arrived at the station we had a Coca-Cola and I ask her if the next time I came to Metz could I meet her and take her to dinner. Her name was Nicole. She said yes and showed me where she lived and I went back to Chambley one happy airman.



Rue de Serneniose. Metz France 1955

My happiness only lasted one day because after I returned to work on Monday and SSgt Ducker told me to go and pack. I was going on a temporary duty assignment to Frist and Phalburg, Germany. The F-86's would be flying alert and we had to support them. I tried to explain to SSgt Ducker about my good fortune and he told me that I had no choice in the matter, I was going! I had no way to tell Nicole that I was going away for the next 45 days. I could only try to contact her when I returned and hopefully take her to dinner if she would let me.

When I returned I found her and explain to her what happen. She said that she understood because her dad had served in the French Air Force for 30 years and she could believe my story. We married in Saint Martin Cathedral, which was built in 1300, Metz France on March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1957. In March of 2008 we will have been married for 51 years. I often wonder what would have happened if she had not spoken English?

I left France in May of 1959 from Etain Air Base were I ended up after the close of Chambley.

I was assigned to Seymour Johnson Air Force Base (AFB), North Carolina to pursue the rest of my Air Force career. While there my job was changed to a missile crew chief and I worked on the GAMM-77 that was carried under the wing of the B-52 Bomber. I was stationed there until 1963 and then reassigned to Mather AFB, California. In 1965 I was cross-trained to an Air Traffic Controller. I was assigned to Technician School in Kessler AFB, Mississippi.

After this Technician School I was sent to Laughlin AFB, Texas. Were I received On-the-Job-Training and attained a 7 level (highly qualified) proficiency rating.

In 1967 I was shipped to the Philippines and stationed at Clark Air Base. After arriving at Clark I was then assigned to the Manila Air Traffic Control Center. This turned out to be a very unusual or maybe even a clandestine assignment. First I could not wear my uniform while on duty as Chief of the Control Center and the Center did not want it known that we were members of the US Air Force. The Air Force paid me civilian clothing allowance in order to maintain the image of being a civilian employee. My job was to block air space to allow USAF planes to pass through the Philippines without radio contact on route to and from the Republic of Vietnam. So for two years five Non-Commissioned Officers worked together without anyone knowing that they were members of the USAF. I received the USAF Commendation Medal for the assignment.

In 1969 was assigned to Dyess AFB Texas. In 1971, after two years at Dyess AFB I was reassigned to a remote Air Force Base in Alaska called Galena AFB. The assignment was for a long year and in 1972 I was shipped to Ellington AFB Texas. This was my last Air Force assignment before I retired. While assigned there I was named NCO of the Year in 1973. A copy of the news article is on the last page of this biography.



I retired from the Air Force on July 1, 1975 after 20 years of honorable service.



After the Air Force I became a Real Estate Broker in Pasadena, Texas. I stayed in this field until 1981 when the interest rate skyrocketed to 17 % and I had to find something else to do. I was lucky I put an application in with Ford Aerospace and with my air traffic control



background they hired me as a track controller. My job was to manage the tracking network for NASA when the shuttle was in the third stage of flight launch, orbit and landing. I retired from Ford Aerospace in January of 1999.

During this time Nicole and I had 3 children two boys and a girl. Elton Jr., Robert and Cindy.

My son Elton Jr. married his wife Gaty and has two children Casey and Patrick Blanchard.



My son Robert married a young lady named Linda and has two children named Bobby and Cody Blanchard.

My daughter Cindy married a young man named Mike Golden and have two children named Julie and Brad Golden.

My family and I now live in Conroe, Texas enjoying our life that retirement brings.

