



A/2C James L. Kirkpatrick
72nd Fighter Bomber Squadron
Chambley AB, France
Nov. 1954 to Nov. 1957

A/2C James L. Kirkpatrick was born on April 6, 1936 in Milwaukee Wisconsin. After high school he decided to join the service and see the world. He went to the Air Force Basic Training Program and then sent to tech school to be an aircraft mechanic. After tech school he was assigned to George Air Force Base in Victorville, California to join the 21st Fighter Bomber wing that was scheduled to deploy to Chambley Air Base in France. Jim was assigned to the 72nd Fighter Bomber Squadron when he got to George and assisted in preparing the F-86 Sabre Jets to deploy prior to boarding the luxurious troop train to Texas.

On November 25, 1954 Jim boarded the troop train headed to the Port of Houston for embarkation to France. At Clovis New Mexico the supporting personnel of the 388th Fighter Wing, also flying Sabres, boarded the train. Then after the three day train ride they arrived at the Port of Houston to board the well remembered General Le Roy Eltinge Troop Ship.



As Jim remembers the trip on the Eltinge took about two weeks bobbing up and down on the Atlantic Ocean. Jim recalls that no matter how hard he tried he just could not sleep at night so like any good Airman would do he volunteered for permanent CQ (Charge-of-Quarters) and relieved his buddies whenever they drew the duty. This of course gave him popularity with the guys and helped to accommodate his insomnia.



Jim thinks that the most significant event that took place while he was at Chambley was the deep freeze back in January of 1956. All of the dependant trailers froze up. The base engineers had to go from trailer to trailer unfreezing all the water lines. It was quite a big mess.

Jim departed France in 1957 and went to New York where he received his Honorable Discharge from the United States Air Force. He went back to Milwaukee and his first civilian job was a Tool and Die Apprentice. He did this for several months and after 13 months he became a city bus driver. This was about in 1958. He wanted to be a city bus driver because this was his father's trade.

After five years as a bus driver Jim moved to Chicago, Illinois where he also drove a bus. He did this for only a year so that he could establish residency allowing him to join the fire service.

Jim became a First Class Fireman and the Para Medic with the Chicago Fire Department and retired after 20 years in about 1985.

Jim Kirkpatrick married twice. His first wife was Ramona who he met in Milwaukee. Jim and Ramona were married for 16 years and then divorced.

He met his second wife 1 year after the divorce. They were married soon after that and as of the 2008 Chambley Reunion Diane and Jim had been married for 25 years.

Jim has five wonderful children, 2 girls and 3 boys. Their names are James the 3rd, Chris, Tim, Kelly and Dawn. His children have provided him with six fantastic grandchildren

After the fire service Jim went into business the Electronics Business and the Gun Business. He had actually started his entrepreneur endeavors while with the fire service. He did this for about thirty years and was quite a successful entrepreneur. He finally retired completely in 1995 mainly due to health problems. His wife Diane still works and owns and operates five daycare centers. Jim spends most of his leisure time fishing and attending air shows. He has an Aviation Room in his basement which he is quite proud of. Jim and his family presently reside in Phoenix Arizona.

