

Rodger D. Norton

Retire AF 1955-1975

I was looking at your web site the other day and it brought back a memory of when I first came to Chambley A.B. back in April 1956.



We had arrived late at night and spent the night in the Transit Barracks. In the morning we were told to go to Headquarters. and get cleared in to the base. I was the only one being assigned to the 531 FBS. After getting my clearance sheet, they told me someone would pick me up and get me cleared in. They didn't say it would be a MSgt, nor that it would be my new First Sgt. For someone right out of Tech School this was quite a shock., but it did get me to the front of the line every where we had to go. MSgt Maher said the birds was heading south soon and he wanted to get me cleared in. I was a little confused with that, what did the birds going south have to do with me getting cleared in to the Sq. and why was the birds going south, it was April, I would think the birds would be heading north in the Spring.

After being in the Sqd. for a few days I found out the birds was the aircraft, and heading south meant the Squadron, was going to Wheelus Field, North Africa.!! Boy, I'm sure glad I didn't ask anyone why the birds was going south in the spring!

A few days later the planes was starting up to head to Wheelus. I was standing in front of the hanger taking in everything that was going on. Then one of the crew chiefs flagged me over to one of the aircraft that had just started up its engine. He pointed to the cockpit, and the pilot motioned for me to come up there. After the crew chief showed me how to get up there. The pilot pointed to a light on the instrument panel, that was glowing red. The pilot asks if that was Ok, I looked at it again and read what it said just above the light. "Gen Out." I looked at the pilot,

and said yes that's OK. I found out later that the Pilot was an Engineering Officer, Lt. Hollandworth, and he knew more about that aircraft than I ever would. He also knew that the new Electrician in the Sqd. didn't know anything. He was promoted to Capt. that trip to North Africa.

A few days later, I arrived in Wheelus, and found out I was the only Electrician in the Sqd. There was a Ground Powerman, A1C Chesterman that was doing the Electrical work on the Aircraft. He took me to the Phase Docks Inspection. Area and showed me how to clean out the Sump Jar for the Battery. Then he said it's all yours, I'm going back to doing my ground power work. I was so green at this job, it didn't even bother me that I didn't know anything about aircraft, and here I was stuck with 18 Aircraft, that would need someone to maintain the electrical system on them, and I was so dumb to even be scared.

A few days later it happened, one of the aircraft came back from a flight with an electrical problem. "Gun-Camera didn't work."

So I got my tools and the T.O. and headed out for the flight line and the broken aircraft. The T.O. said there was a relay in the system and it looked like it might be in the nose of the aircraft someplace.

So I took my flashlight and went in the nose wheel well and was looking around at everything, when all of a sudden, I hear this loud bang and then a hissing sound, at the same time I felt something hit my foot. I looked down to see a tongue of one of the units pulled around on the flight line.

"I want to say that this has all happened in the first 20 days of me arriving in France, and if God hadn't been looking over me, I wouldn't be telling this story 50 years later." (Back to the story)

As I crawled out of the wheel well and looked up, everyone on the flight line was looking my direction. As I stood-up and turned to look at the

aircraft and the Oxygen cart nosed into the side of the aircraft just below the bottom gun on the right side, there was a big hole punched in the side with white smoke coming out the hole. No it wasn't smoke it was oxygen coming from the oxygen bottle in the aircraft.

With out God's help that day, I would have been a part of North Africa for ever.

The Oxygen Cart had come loose from the Tug, because someone hadn't put the pin in the tongue of the cart, and it came loose and rolled across the road and hit the side of the aircraft that I was standing in the wheel well of.

My three children and grandchildren sure are glade that this new "aircraft electrician," had a little extra help that day, back in April 1956.

Also went back to Chambley AB, France in 1965, till aircraft, me and a lot other unhappy guys, was sent to Takhli, Thailand in 1966. 25th Tac Recon. EB-66.

The Rest of the Story

After returning to the States for only five years, I again returned to France and Chambley, in 1965. I never thought I would get a chance to go back to Chambley.

When I left 531FBS in Chambley back in 1957 and returned from Saudi Arabia were we had spent 90 days TDY. The Saudi Air Force took over our F-86F, tool boxes and all. On my return from Saudi Arabia, I was assigned to the 303 Tac. Recon. Sq. at Sembach, Germany, working on RF-84F A/C. That didn't last long, because the 66th Tac. Recon. Group, was transferred to Loan AB, France, around August of 1958 and are RF-84's were replaced with new RF-101B aircraft.

While I was assigned to Sembach AB, Germany, I got my first look at EB-66 A/C. Not knowing that I would ever work on them.

On my return to Chambley AB, in 1965, I was assigned to the 25 FMS, the base was being assigned EB-66 aircraft from England.

While the EB-66 and a lot of GI's including myself, were only at Chambley for a very short time, before we were off to SEA, and Takhli, Thailand.

We did have some TDY, trips while at Chambley with the EB-66's. One I remember very well was to Moron AB, Spain. On this trip I was assigned to run the Night Shift, or the clean up crew. One night I had cut the crew back, as we only had one aircraft to do a post flight on. Upon its completion the crew chief said he needed to make a run-up to check for a hydraulic leak. and there was an engine man that needed a check run, so he could make run-ups. So I said OK engine man run, crew chief in the right seat to check him out and instrument man on the ground cord. While I had gone to get the hydraulic man in the barracks, to fix the leak in the weapons bay. I hadn't been gone more than 15 minutes. When I came back I couldn't even get close to the aircraft. There were red lights flashing every place.

The crew chief, had told the Instrument man on the ground cord to check to see if he could find the leak. Then the engine back-fired. The crew chief told the engine man to shut the engine down. But the engine man thought the crew chief wanted him to take it to 100%, so if there was a fire he could wind-mill the other engine to put it out. So the crew chief reached over and shut the engine off and went down the steps.

When he got to the left engine and looked inside all he could see was the feet of the Instrument man that had been on the ground cord. He ask him if he was OK and he said all my money went in the engine. He had went to check for the hydraulic leak, and walked right in front of the

engine and it sucked him up the intake. The engine man was there by then and they pulled the Instrument man out of the intake.

They had called the tower for help, the ambulance showed up shortly after they got the Instrument man out of the intake and he was taken away by them. They air evacuated him to Aviano AB, Italy.

The next morning there was allot of new M/Sgts also Sheep Pens to put in front of the engines for ground runs.

Are TDY time was up in about a week and we returned to Chambley, the Insturment man was back at work and wasn't hurt at all, other than loosing his money and him watch that had got sucked out of his pockets and off his arm.

It was a good TDY, thanks to God looking over us. Back in 1966.

**Rodger D. Norton
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Roger D. Norton, 531st Fighter Bomber Squadron passed away on April the 8th of 2008. He suffered a massive heart attack. He was put to rest April 14th at Woodlawn Cemetery in Ohio City, Ohio.

