

Jeff McRaney - My Story

In June 1960 I enlisted in the USAF right out of high school. After basic training at Lackland AFB in San Antonio I was sent to Keesler AFB MS for training as an Airborne ECM repairman. I finished my training at Keesler in July '61 and was assigned to the Air Force Security Service and sent to Goodfellow AFB TX for some "special" training. After a few months at Goodfellow I was sent to Stead AFB NV for 3 weeks of Combat Survival Training and then to my duty assignment with Det 1 6988th RSM at Yokota AB Japan (about 25 miles NW of the center of Tokyo). I arrived at Yokota in early December '61. The 88th was just completing the transition from the Haystack aircraft (RB-50s) to the Sun Valley II aircraft (C-130Bs) when I arrived there. The Sun Valley IIs were an LTV Temco Aerospace Greenville Div product and Richard McManus, an LTV tech rep, was assigned to Det 1 88th. I had met Richard at Goodfellow.

I was soon put on flight status, as all technicians assigned to Det 1 were required to be on flight status. I flew my first mission as a crewmember in late December '61. At that time most of the missions were to the North. In those days there was a forward operating base at Misawa AB Japan, about 350 N of Yokota (on the northeast coast of Honshu), and TDYs to Shemya AFS, Elmendorf AFB and Eielson AFB in Alaska. Operating out of Shemya during that time was exciting. There were no suitable alternatives within range of Shemya so when we got there, we had to land, regardless of conditions. Shemya had been a big operation during WW II, to support the bombing of Japan. Attu, only 60 miles to the west, was occupied by the Japanese during WWII. Shemya was closed by the US Military from the early '50s until the early '60s. There was a very long runway, but it was controlled by the commercial airlines as an emergency landing spot for transpacific flights. There was a VOR but no TACAN or ILS or assistance other than a GCA radar (localizer and glideslope) operated by an FAA contractor who had to be called up if anyone wanted help. Very low ceilings, low visibility and high winds were very common. The areas around the runway were littered with the remains of aircraft that made their last landing there. Although the island - about 2 miles wide and 4 miles long - was covered with many small buildings none had been maintained. There was one large composite building that housed the permanent military group. They would find a place for us to sleep in the big building whenever we showed up. The food was awful compared to our dining facility at Yokota. Our stays were typically 2-3 days at a time. A few of our operations out of Eielson took us over the Arctic Ocean. In those days there was lots of ice there. Operations out of Elmendorf took us over the Bering Sea, out around St Lawrence Island and along the Bering Strait, lots of ice there too. A big concern operating out of Elmendorf was avoiding collisions with moose during takeoffs and landings. They seemed to be everywhere.

In mid-July '62 I was called into my supervisor's office and told that two members of the Det 1 would be going TDY to MacDill AFB FL (adjacent city is Tampa) for an extended period and to be ready to leave in a couple of days and to take our flight gear. We made our way to MacDill where we met up with pilots, navigators and a flight engineer from our companion organization at Yokota. Within a few days a factory fresh Sun Valley II aircraft was brought in from LTV in

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Greenville TX. We soon commenced almost daily operations and continued until early November '62. We ran into the 500-hour airframe inspection and our 6-month TDY limit and were replaced by a Sun Valley I aircraft and crew. Our aircraft was returned to LTV Greenville for inspection and transfer to Yokota and our crew members were returned to their home bases. We left MacDill in early November '62 and after a week of leave, we met at LTV in Greenville to catch a ride on a new Sun Valley II aircraft that was being delivered to Yokota. Our ride was delayed in San Francisco, so we went up to Travis AFB and got on a MATS contract flight to Japan.

After returning to Yokota, it was back to the usual routine. Some of the operations had shifted to the south. Kadena AB on Okinawa, about 500 miles SW of Yokota, was a forward operating base with some TDYs to Clark AFB PI, Bangkok International Airport, Changi RAB Singapore and Darwin AU.

By mid 1964 we were operating from Bangkok International Airport to fly over the Tonkin Gulf. Later in the year we were, for my first time, flying missions with fighter escorts. Up until that time we had always done our operations with no defensive support. Looking out the window to see four F100s trying to pace us was a sight. They couldn't fly slow enough to stay with us so they would fly a crossing pattern under us, side to side. I am sure that was not easy. A KB-50J would refuel them after a while. On one hand it was a good feeling and on the other hand fingers were crossed that everything remained routine.

I completed my overseas tour - 3 years - at Yokota in November '64 and was sent to Travis AFB CA and released from active duty. I was awarded The Air Force Commendation Medal and The Air Medal for my service at the 6988th.

After a few days back to Arkansas to see my parents, I drove to Greenville TX and with the help of my friend Richard McManus I applied for a job and was hired by LTV-Greenville Division in December '64. The name of the company, by then, had been changed to LTV Electrosystems. I think my hire date was December 10, 1964.

My first job with LTV was as an engineering technician in the Engineering Lab. It wasn't very interesting work, but jobs were hard to find, and I was grateful to have one.

In late '65 I was loaned to a group that was designing and building the Bankhead III System. The Bankhead system was packed up and shipped to its operational site in the spring of '66 and I went to Sinop Turkey to help with the installation. Sinop is a Black Sea port in North Central Turkey. It took about 3 months for our part of the installation and checkout.

I can remember riding the company plane several times on the round trip from Greenville to Love field and landing on that short runway at Garland. It was made even more exciting by sitting in the copilot's seat. Also, I found it exciting when we taxied among those 707s at Love Field. The company plane at that time was a Beech Queen Air. The pilot that I rode with was

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killed, along with 6 military personnel, on September 27, 1967 in the crash of a company Aero Commander 560 in Dallas.

In late '66 I was asked to fill one of the technical representative slots at BH III and I returned to Sinop in Jan '67 and remained until Nov '68.

In early '69 LTV Electrosystems was completing the modification of some C-130As into Gunships for deployment to Vietnam. C-130 and C-119 crews were being trained at Lockbourne AFB OH and they needed a company representative there. I drew the short straw. It only lasted a few months thank goodness.

I continued supporting several programs including the C130 Gunships and the Blackspot program.

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In mid '70 I was assigned to the Pave Nail program, a joint LTV - Varo project. Some of the testing was done at the Eglin Test Range in FL and we spent several months there. We deployed to Clark AB PI in early '71 to complete modifications to the OV-10 mission aircraft and then to Ubon AB in Thailand for a few months testing and then to NKP AB to begin operations. I continued with the Pave Nail support team until early '72. In 1972 the company name became E-Systems.

In '73 I was assigned to the Rivet Joint prototype development program. I supported the procurement of the YUK15 computers from Univac and their integration with the AEELS program at Garland. I spent many nights at the Antenna Test Range in Garland - that was before Garland got their anechoic chamber. After about 6 months I supported the Rivet Joint Prototype test flights out of Greenville followed by field testing at Offutt AFB NB.

In '74, for about a year, I was the operator and maintainer of the Rivet Joint Ground Terminal at EUDAC Lindsey AS in Wiesbaden FRG.

The Vietnam War ended in 1975 and the defense budgets, especially Intel, were drastically cut. In '75 it was back to Shemya for 3 months to support an operation there.

By 1976 the Greenville facility employment had been severely reduced, and the main business was the Sinai Field Mission. Nearly everyone still there was being asked to do a tour at the SFM. I decided that it would not be in my best interest to do another overseas tour at that time, so I reluctantly left E-Systems.

After that I had several jobs, none of which was as satisfying as my E-Systems work.

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In 1985, while I was working at Scientific Communications in Garland, my friend and mentor Carroll Bunch recruited me back to E-Systems. I had worked with Carroll during the AEELS development.

In the mid-80s E-Systems Garland Div was a bustling place. Lots of business. They were building more parking lots and acquiring out budlings to make room. My first jobs were with the WSRP program and the Seahawk program.

After the jobs in Special Projects completed, I worked in Space Systems. The company became part of Raytheon in 1995.

It was fun and rewarding to be involved in such interesting work and to work with lots of smart/interesting people.

I retired in March 1998.

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