

Biography of Robert David Watts

I was born at a very early age at St Elizabeth's hospital in Elizabethton Tennessee in 1947. I find it interesting that St Elizabeth's is now an old age home.....life is really a circle.

I grew up in the local area and lived in Johnson City and Kingsport. I almost graduated from Science Hill High school in 1965 but the draft and a football injury intervened, and I opted to join the United States Air Force...I hate not being in control.

The Air Force and I were a perfect fit. I spent the next 22 years enjoying the military. Along the way I got married had four children, graduated from high school, graduated college with BS and MA degrees and I even completed one year of law school.

Military Life

My first 8 years were as a Survival Instructor training combat aircrew member how to not die on the ground or get caught should they be shot down or must bail out of their aircraft.

In 1965 after completing basic training and volunteering for Survival School duty I was posted at Fairchild Air Force base in Washington State. Hello Global Survival School! There during a full year's training, I picked up combat medic training, academic Instruction certification, airborne training and how to survive anywhere with minimal supplies. I was able to do temporary duty as a resistance interrogation officer (the Air Force operated a POW camp where we attempted to break aircrew members through intense interrogation and physical coercion schemes). Interesting note: during this period (1965-1973) the survival radios were line of sight only and helicopters did not have in-flight refueling capability. These facts impacted what and how the students were taught. The emphasis was on designated safe areas and cross-country travel to get to a location where a pick-up was possible.

In 1970 I was transferred to the Water Survival School at Tyndall Air Force Base in Panama City Florida. We used parasails to train students how to enter the water and configure their equipment. It was here that I was placed on jump status and completed over 120 jumps. It was also here during my first jump that I set the record for missing the designated landing zone by the largest recorded margin (26 miles) but that is another story.

In 1971 I was sent to the Jungle Survival School at Clark Air Force base in the Philippines. The proximity to the war zone made this a very sobering assignment. Over the next two years I was able to perform temporary duty at Okinawa (water survival) Panama (Jungle Survival) Alaska (Arctic Survival) and Tripoli (desert survival). While in the Philippines I was selected to become the thirteenth person successful ground extraction using the Fulton Recovery System (Sky Hook). The Fulton system consists of an air-dropped helium tank, an insulated harness, 600 feet of nylon rope and a 40-foot long balloon. After filling the balloon, attaching it to yourself and the suit with rope, a specially configured C130 flies by, snags the rope (and you) and flies off with you trailing behind at 180 miles per hour. All of this was because our aircrew members were being shot down beyond the range of our rescue helicopters. Side note: the Fulton Recovery System was only deployed operationally once in Laos, but the aircrew member was captured before he could be picked up.

It was during my stay in the Philippines that I got serious about my education and acting on my desire to become an Air Force Officer. I became an expert on the Air Force educational

programs, their requirements and how to successfully compete for selection. I competed and was accepted into the Airman's Education and Commissioning Program. In 1973 the Air Force selected me to attend Washington State University. In 1975 I graduated from WSU (cum laude) and was sent to Officer Candidate School in San Antonio Texas. At the end of the training I was named a Distinguished Graduate and I moved on to become an Air Force Security Police Officer.

1976- 1977 I found myself back at Fairchild Air Force base as one of 14 other second lieutenants responsible for protecting a nuclear alert Strategic Air Command B-52 base. Over the next year I became the Operations Officer for the 92nd Security Police Squadron with 13 second lieutenants, one Captain and 387 security police personnel working for me. Highlights of that assignment included:

- Earning an Inspector General Exceptional rating for nuclear weapons convoy operations
- Earning second place in the SAC Giant Sword competition
- Being commended for successfully managing and concluding a barricaded shooter incident in a residence hall
- Investigating and solving an incident where someone wrote "SAC Sucks" in six-foot tall letters on the side of a nuclear armed B-52 while it was on alert status on the flight line.

1978 I was sent to Murtef Turkey (a Turkish Air Force base 150 miles outside Ankara) as Weapons Control Officer and Chief of Security. There were 125 Americans on this Turkish run base. Our job was to protect critical US munitions and arm the weapons for deployment should it be needed.

In 1979 I returned to San Antonio as a Flight Commander at the Air Force Officer's Training School. While there I trained and commissioned over 90 men and women. I was also participated in the creation and implementation of the Academic Enhancement Program (This program was created to pull otherwise qualified officer candidates out of training and give them specific instructions and techniques on how to deal with the academic rigor of the program and then place them back into the program).

In 1980 I successfully competed for one of twenty positions in the Air Staff Training Program (ASTRA). I was selected to spend a year in the Secretary of the Air Force's Staff Group at the Pentagon. Working directly with the Secretary I and the other 8 members of the permanent team wrote speeches, drafted articles for publication, performed research and accompanied the Secretary on official trips. These were the days of stenographers, Wang word processors and Colonels who could not operate the phone on their desks. Among other things I learned that it is good to be the Secretary (no locked doors, no baggage to handle, you are never late because nothing starts until you get there, everything you see is freshly painted or new and most importantly, you travel by private jet, helicopter or in a protected convoy).

In 1981 I was transferred to Colorado Springs to become the Security Operations Officer for NORAD and the newly formed Air Force Space Command. This was exciting as we formed an entirely new operation combining assets from SAC, MAC and other designated commands. At the end we had over 1200 operating locations around the world including Cheyenne Mountain.

In 1984 I was selected to become the Squadron Commander for the NORAD elite Guard and Cheyenne Mountain. For those of you who do not know, Cheyenne Mountain is the hollowed-

out mountain in Colorado built to withstand a direct atomic bomb attack. Here I had 8 flag officers who, on a rotating basis, commanded the nations surveillance systems and monitored all activity in the atmosphere or in orbit above the earth from within the mountain. Did I mention that while on-duty, those eight flag officers were my boss....very interesting. It was here that I was selected for early promotion (two years below the zone) to Major.

In 1985, after conferring with my career counselor, I learned that my new career path included nothing new. My next assignment would be to Europe to a hard mission unit as a squadron commander. I was not interested because I had been there and done that. I was also under the conviction that if you were over 40 years old you were not employable in the private sector. I refused my promotion and was transferred to NORAD as the number two security guy. In 1986 I retired from the military.

Civilian Life

Texas Instruments hired and moved me to Lewisville Texas (30 miles outside of Dallas) to be the number two guy in a two man security detail responsible for a black program. After 6 months I was promoted to running Physical Security for three plants. Six months later I was in charge of all security for 4 plants (Physical, Information and Black Programs . This is the point where you think you have arrived. I had a corner office, a private secretary and life was good.....then the Berlin Wall came down. In less than 8 months 26 thousand people and the entire Defense Systems Engineering Group of Texas Instruments was disbanded.

On the Street

Where does a semi-skilled, former Air Force, soft skilled person go and what do they do?

I went to work for a property management group that was in charge of putting together the support and operations systems of GTE's new 3 million square foot headquarters in Dallas. They hired me because I could build the security program and processes for them. Over the next two years, through construction and grand opening, I did just that. However, after two years it became clear that GTE's security plans did not include me.

Pinkerton Man

Now I am in charge of over 1500 contractor personnel servicing 180 individual customers. The job came with an unlimited expense account and a new car. Without a doubt this was my least enjoyable job so far. Between employees who did not show up for work, 90-hour weeks and getting customers to pay their bills, I was not happy. After a year I moved on.

University Life

The University of Dallas hired me to be their Director of Safety. This turned out to not be very challenging; I now have 11 direct reports and an operational budget of \$46K. After three months we had solved the budget, uniform and staffing problems. We also solved a community relations problem by eliminating parking fees. The team and I also replaced the 1978 Ford Fairmont station wagon patrol car (that we shared with the painter) with a "real" and new police car complete with graphics, lights, sirens, and radios. After 4 months, In good conscience, I had to recommend to the University Board that my position be eliminated and instead be combined with the responsibilities of a then vacant Assistant Director of Facilities position.

Custodial Services, Grounds Maintenance, Life and Fire Safety and Cafeteria Services

What a mixed bag of duties! But I was blessed with an extremely talented and generous boss who made a point of sharing everything he knew while exposing me to increasingly complex issues. It was here Over the next 4 years that I learned the craft that became my calling: Property Management. During this period, we installed an HVAC ice system, repaved all of the roads, built 2 new dorms and two new education facilities and we replaced all of the chilled water lines (all of this without causing a shut-down of classes).

Into the Frying Pan

You may remember that I like to be in control. With an eye to the next better thing, I had posted my resume on-line and Johnson Controls called. They needed someone who could manage a mixed-bag of duties; security, safety and facility operations. What I did not know is that the customer (AK Steel) had fired the previous two account directors. After a series of company interviews, I met with the customer. The customer said that I had 90 days to turn the operation around. Remember that this point I had not been offered the job. Excuse me, I forgot to mention what the job was. This position was responsible for medical services which included emergency response plus a hospital, fire protection, custodial services, grounds, security, shipping and receiving, company records archiving and executive protection of the CEO at four steel plants located in three states. After significant discussions I eventually accepted a position at the VP level complete with a new car every year and an unlimited expense account..... Did I mention that we had to make money for Johnson Controls. The budget turned out to be the most difficult part of the job and my first significant action (after turning things around in 90 days) was to present the customer with a price increase (they accepted the price increase and we were now in the black).

Business Development

The military instills a sense of an obligation to continue to move forward and hopefully move up. After a year at AK Steel with operations in hand I trained my replacement and moved on to selling Johnson Controls nation-wide. The biggest accomplish I had in this period was to land Motorola and their 23 operating locations in the United States.

Retail Crisis

Johnson Controls landed the JC Penney account (\$148M annual fee and over 1700 stores to include the new company headquarters in Plano). The chosen account director failed and they needed someone quickly. They made me available. I was now back in Dallas where for the next two years I and our team of 600 direct employees and 17000 contractors successfully serviced JC Penney.

Ivy Halls

After 2 years I got itchy feet and replied to a nation-wide search for the position of Director of Facilities at the University of Chicago Graduate School of Business (now the Booth School). After a lengthy interview process I was selected to assume responsibility for the 2 million square foot Graduate School of Business building that was under construction (Security, Food Service, Facility Service, Life Safety, Print Shop, Grounds Maintenance, Special event services. I was hired in May with the grand opening scheduled for September. This was a nightmare. After our commissioning agent listed over 2800 significant defects the University Leadership

ended up accepting the building as it was so we could meet the school year start. They turned to me and told me to make it work. Major systems that required extensive modification included:

- Failed dry fire suppression systems
- Failed drainage system
- Inoperative fire alarm system
- Hot water system (we could not deliver the required water temperature through the building)
- Chiller and back-up system failures
- Unlevel Floors
- Failed air handling system (all motors had to be replaced)
- Roof leaks
- Key plan
- Facility Systems Management System programming and testing
- And etc

All of the problems were overcome, in most cases, students, faculty and staff were unaware of the problems. I stayed in this position for four years culminating with our facility being awarded the Building of the Year award for Chicago and the Central Region of BOMA. What was most gratifying was that this award was not for the structure but for the provided services.

I retired for the second time.

Back to Dallas to join my family who, because of elderly parents who were living with us, was unable to move to Chicago. I enjoyed the good life for the next year. We took cruises and even rode a motorcycle from Dallas to Prudhoe Bay and back.

2008 the crash

Back to work. I lost almost all of my retirement funds due to the crash and my blind faith in a very well-known financial firm.

What Tools Do You Need

Because my needs were small I took a part-time at Home Depot. I was the best cashier they ever had. After two months they asked me to be their store auditor (primarily because I had the ability to be at work on time and as scheduled). Store auditor is a person who balances the books, makes the tills for the cashiers, maintains and tracks the time sheets, orders money and makes deposits. The job continued to grow until I was working over 40 hours. I decided that if I was going to work full-time I should find something that paid more than \$8.50 an hour.

Back to Johnson Controls

Johnson Controls needed an Operations Manager for the Ericsson Account in Dallas. The position was really financial not operations. The job was to identify tasks and jobs that were outside the contract and get paid for them. After a few months and over \$10 million in extra billings I was given a clerk to help me. The out of scope work continued to expand reaching \$25 million. About this same time Ericsson awarded Johnson Controls all of their facilities except those in Europe and I moved into an Operations Director position.

After a few very successful years there was a change in leadership.

I knew I was in trouble when the new 28 year old Account Director met me and asked "How old are you". My premonitions were correct. Over the next 12 months I found my scope of responsibilities reduced and my authority undermined in very subtle ways (these are classic moves that are made to motivate people to leave voluntarily).

I resigned.

Third Retirement

We sold our house in Dallas and we moved to Tennessee.

We are very happy here.

One of my biggest joys besides being back to my birthplace was discovering the HAM radio hobby. With the encouragement of my brother I began my study and quickly moved through the classes. I obtained my Extra Class license in less than 8 months after starting my study. Along the way I have found my second, third and fourth families in the members of the Kingsport Club.

My first radio is an FT-101EE (a tube radio) I still have it and it still works great.

My second radio was a Yaesu FT-817D. My mentor and friend John Williams convinced me this was the best radio to have for SOTA operations. For me this was the best choice I could have made. It is an excellent piece of equipment. I enjoyed participating in SOTA expeditions until I found the hiking an insurmountable challenge. I am looking forward to following the footsteps (sic) of some of our fellow club members and go to sites that require less hiking.

My current radio is an ICOM 7300. I am very happy with this radio. This radio reminded me that I have a lot to learn about our hobby. For example, I bought a signal link USB sound card so I could participate in WHSPR and FT-8. As those of you reading this know, the ICOM has a built-in sound card and requires nothing more than a USB cable to participate in FT-8.

My antenna is an end fed wire dipole that is 125 feet long.

73

Bob

