James N. Wood

Assistant Dean / Resident Director, Director of Financial Aid, Coordinator of Veteran Services, and Dean for Advisement Services
(1969-1981)



US Air Force
Viet Nam Era
1st Lieutenant

Served Active Duty 1971-1973
Ready Reserves until April 26, 1981

I volunteered to serve in the Air Force while working at SUNY Brockport as the Director of Financial Aid. After taking military leave in June of 1971, I was assigned to the following duty stations:

Lackland AFB San Antonio, Texas, OTS
Webb AFB Big Spring, Texas, Pilot Training
Keesler AFB Biloxi Mississippi, Electronics Systems School
Westover AFB Chicopee, Mass, 18th Comm Squadron, SAC

At Westover I served as a Communications' Systems officer in the Strategic Air Command, B-52 Wing. With a TOP Secret / Crypto clearance, my duties included Base Electronic Security. Maintaining strict routines was crucial as we completed our daily testing and assessment of secrecy and security. Although the war in Viet Nam was winding down, the Cold War was still heating up and it was very important that all base communications systems remain secure. Encrypted messages were received and sent via electronic devices contained in a bomb-proof vault. Each morning a Sergeant and I would enter the bank-like vault, decipher messages and then shred and burn them. Most messages were garbage, but pains were taken to ensure that the same volume of messages were sent and received each day. Likewise, we monitored the amount of electric power that was used and attenuated it as needed to always appear "normal". These activities were done to ensure that spy agencies could not pickup clues about our activity, based upon increases or decreases in communication or electric utilization. I was exposed to state-of-art solid state electronics including; high-gain directional microphones that could hear through walls form a block away; and cameras that could photograph satellites or an object on the moon, as small as an orange! Not bad for early 70's technology! [Jim is third from the left in the back row in the photo.]





Being new to military family life could have been scary for a new 2nd Lieutenant, but any worries that we may have had were quickly put to rest at our first base. The Air Force "family" was there to welcome and help the newcomers find their way. These fellow officers and families were wonderful people, warm, sincere, trusting and the only request they had was to "pay it forward" – and we did. In short, the military families were bonded by their common culture to lookout for each other.

I am very proud to have served in the Air Force. My brother served in the Air Force with duty in Viet Nam and my father served in the Army Corp of Engineers, stationed in the Aleutian Islands during WWII. I guess you would say we were a patriotic family. However, when I left active duty I was likewise, very happy to return to Brockport and to continue working at the college.

As a graduate of SUNY Brockport BS '68, MS '70. I have fond memories (1969-1981) working as an Assistant Dean / Resident Director, Director of Financial Aid, Coordinator of Veteran Services, and Dean for Advisement Services. I earned my PhD from University of Buffalo in 1986 and finished my career as the Assistant Superintendent Schools in Brockport.