

ALL GAVE SOME; SOME GAVE ALL

This week's veteran is Bill Pinkston.

Bill was raised on a farm northwest of Assumption by his parents, Lawrence and Aileen Pinkston. He attended Assumption High School graduating in 1960. In March of 1962, he and Gary Root enlisted in the Air Force together. They went by train to St. Louis for processing and from there, Bill was sent to Lackland Air Force Base, TX, for eight weeks of basic training. After basic, he received technical training in base supply at Amarillo Air Force Base, TX.

Thinking that he would be sent home on leave after his schooling, Bill was surprised to receive orders to report to Camp Perry, OH. At Camp Perry, he was taught to score targets for the National Rifle Matches held in August of 1962 at Camp Perry. The matches were under the supervision of the Department of Defense at that time.

After the Matches were concluded, Bill went home for leave before being sent to Loring Air Force Base near Caribou, Maine. Loring was the largest base of the United States Air Force's Strategic Air Command during its existence. Bill worked in supply as a fork-lift driver. His most vivid memories of Loring are the amount of snow and low temperatures during the winter. While at Loring, he was honored as Airman of the Month.

Bill's next assignment was Guam. Anything to get out of the cold was welcome news to him. The day he left Caribou, it was 10 degrees below zero. When he landed in Guam, it was 75 degrees. He celebrated by going swimming. His trip was not without peril. About 1/3 of the way to Hawaii on the first leg of the flight to Guam, his airplane lost power in one engine. The plane had to dump fuel and turn around and go back. He said it was "nervous time". They were put on the same plane for the trip a few days later which didn't make him feel too secure.

While on Guam, he was assigned to Andersen Air Force Base as a materials handler. In June of 1965 with the start of Operation Arc Light, B-52 bombing raids on Vietnam, supply personnel worked twelve hour shifts, seven days a week. Upon completion of his tour of duty, he returned to the States. Although he stopped in Hawaii going to and from Guam, he never got to see any of it because they never let the airmen off the plane. Because he didn't have enough time left for another tour of duty before his enlistment terminated, Bill was discharged in October of 1965. When he returned home, he worked for King's Feed Store until being hired at Caterpillar in 1967.

Bill and Sue Burton were married November 21, 1965. They have three sons: Rodney, Brian, and Billy, and two granddaughters. Two of their sons, Rodney and Brian were in the Gulf War at the same time. WCIA, Channel 3, Champaign, IL, interview them about how it felt to have two sons deployed in dangerous circumstances. As all parents in that situation, they remember many anxious moments until Rod and Brian's tours of duty were completed.

Thank you, Airman 2nd Class Billy G. Pinkston, for what you gave for us.