

This week's veteran is Mark Miller.

Mark graduated from Assumption High School in 1984. After spending two years doing farm work, he enlisted in the Air Force in September of 1986 and reported to Lackland AFB, Texas, to begin basic training in March of 1987. His advanced training at Lowry AFB, CO, was to become an Aircraft Armament System Specialist, loading missiles on F-15s.

His first regular duty was at Langley AFB, VA, where he was assigned to the 48th Fighter Interceptor Squadron. The 48th's mission was to intercept any enemy aircraft that might approach the United States. A few times they were sent to intercept Russian planes that had entered the United States airspace. Mark's team was in charge of arming the F-15s.

After serving for almost three years at Langley, October 1987 to September of 1990, Mark was transferred to Keflavik, Iceland. He was assigned to the 57th Fighter Interceptor Squadron. The 57th helped provide for the defense of Europe. Once, while he was there, the 57th was scrambled to intercept eight Russian bombers which apparently intruded into NATO airspace just to test our defenses. In a combat situation, an F-15 armament crew was supposed to arm the F-15 in 45 minutes, but Mark's crew did it once in 17 minutes.

In October of 1991, Mark was assigned to Whiteman AFB, MO. He was retrained in heating, ventilation, and air conditioning, and assigned to a Prime BEEF (Prime Base Engineer Emergency Force) unit. Prime BEEF units provide a full range of engineering support for existing bases or new bases and can be deployed quickly to anyplace in the world. Mark was sent as a member of a 43-man team to Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, from February 1993 to July 1993. Most of the time he was an instructor in the Prime BEEF program.

Mark left active duty in March of 1997 and joined the 182d Airlift Wing, Illinois Air National Guard in Peoria. They fly the 130-Hercules. He trained to become a firefighter. The 182d was deployed to Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, in August 2001. Mark retired from the National Guard in 2007, but he continues to work as a civilian firefighter at the base in Peoria, working 24 hours every third day. The firehouse at the base is the staging area for Presidential Motorcades in Peoria. He has witnessed three motorcades: President George H. W. Bush twice, and President Obama.

Mark is married to Robin (Dial) Miller. They have six children and one grandchild.

Thank you, Technical Sergeant Mark A. Miller, for what you did for us.