

ALL GAVE SOME; SOME GAVE ALL

This week's veteran is Ron Mink.

Ron graduated from Assumption High School in May of 1959. In August of 1959, he enlisted in the U.S. Air Force and was sent to Lackland Air Force Base, San Antonio, TX, for basic training. After basic, he went to Amarillo AFB, Amarillo, TX, for three months for base supply training.

After Amarillo, on January 9, 1960, he flew from Charleston, NC, to Incirlik Air Base near Adana, Turkey, which is about 35 miles inland from the Mediterranean Sea. Incirlik was a secret base from which the Lockheed U-2 spy flights over Russia originated. Except for the Air Force, nobody knew where Ron was. He communicated with his family through an APO number. Ron was at Incirlik when Gary Powers' ill-fated flight took off to fly a reconnaissance mission over Russia. On May 1, 1960, Gary Powers was shot down by 14 Soviet SA-2 surface-to-air missiles near Sverdlovsk, Russia, an ICBM test site. After Powers was shot down, Ron said that all U-2's were dismantled, placed in crates, and shipped from Incirlik. Although Ron did not know Gary Powers, he did know the pilot who escorted him on the first part of his flight.

On June 29, 1961, after 18 months at Incirlik, Ron returned to the States. On his flight home, he spent eight days at Rhein-Main AFB, Frankfurt, Germany. He reported to Duluth AFB, Duluth, MN, on August 7, 1961. After two years at Duluth AFB, he was discharged on August 9, 1963.

Upon returning to Assumption, Ron worked for the Illinois Central Railroad in Decatur. After three years with the IC, he went to work for the Norfolk Southern where he remained for 35 years. He was a yard clerk. In May of 1965, Ron and Mary Ellen Wilson Mink were married. Mary Ellen died August 18, 2007. Ron has three children: Colleen, Collette, and Curt, and five grandchildren.

Thank you, Airman First Class Ronald Mink, for what you gave for us.