

## **Enlistment History of Ronald E. Lunstrum**

After a childhood of fascination with airplanes and flying, I enlisted in the Civil Air Patrol Cadet program at its inception in 1942. I was rapidly promoted to Technical Sergeant (there were no officer ranks among the cadets at that time). I was selected to be in command of the Cadet Squadron and carried out that function for the next three years.

At age seventeen, I enlisted in the US Army Air Force Reserve which was the path to flight training at that time. In April 1945, Germany surrendered so all of the USAAF flight crews in the European Theatre were available for duty in the war with Japan. This caused them to cancel all aircrew training and they offered those waiting to be called either an immediate discharge or service in the ground crews in the USAAF. I accepted the latter option which amounted to another voluntary enlistment.

On August 6, 1945 (twenty-eight days after my eighteenth birthday) I was called to active duty and sent to Keesler Field, MS for basic training. Since this was the same day that we dropped the first Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima, Japan, I always took pleasure in telling people that I never really knew whether Japan surrendered because of fear for more A-bomb attacks or the fact that I was coming. Following this, I was assigned to the Field Hospital Mess Department (because I had worked in a bakery during high school vacations). Because there were so many high point war veterans being discharged at that time, I was promoted to Corporal and placed in the position of NCO in Charge of the Mess Department (this was a Master Sergeant's job). After nine months on this job, I enlisted in the Regular Army for one year and that gave me a permanent rank instead of temporary.

This change necessitated a transfer so in September, 1946, I was sent to Meeks Field in Keflavik, Iceland, a station in the North Atlantic Division, Air Transport Command (a refueling stop for trans-Atlantic military and civilian flights). It was here, in my job as Chief Clerk in the Aircraft Maintenance Office, that I was promoted to Sergeant. In May of 1947, the field and facilities were turned over to American

Overseas Airlines. Those of us who had completed our enlistment, were sent to Fort Dix, New Jersey for immediate discharge. The troopship sent to bring us back to the US broke a rudder in the rough North Atlantic seas and it took three weeks for another ship to come after us. A memorable event happened the day after the first ship was to pick us up. We had only seen the first newsreels of the A-bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki a few weeks before. On that morning at about 7:00AM, we heard a loud boom and the ground was shaking so we ran out of our huts to see what was happening and on the horizon (about sixty miles away) was a huge mushroom cloud. We wondered why we were being bombed and then found out that it was Mt. Hekla (an active volcano) that had erupted. Fortunately, the wind was blowing in another direction but an island about the same distance from Hekla as we were, got covered with more than four inches of lava dust.

Upon arrival at the Separation Center at Ft. Dix, were processed for discharge from active duty in May 1947 but not before I enlisted in the US Army Air Force Reserve for three years. My reason for doing this was that I was not yet twenty years old and not being in the reserve left you vulnerable to being drafted into the infantry.

In May 1950, I re-enlisted for another three years in the Air Force Reserve and the "Police Action" in Korea broke out a month or so later. I was not happy with my job on the railroad so I applied (enlisted) for active duty. I was called in December 1950 and assigned to Selfridge Air Force Base, Michigan. Headquarters, 10<sup>th</sup> Air Force was the command that controlled all Air Force Reserves but their records were five years out of date and they needed to recall troops to meet the needs for Korea. They established two teams of Air Force and civilian personnel to update these records. Many of the World War II flight crews and pilots were now qualified doctors, lawyers and other professionals that had no relationship to their prior military duties and qualifications. I was assigned to head one of these teams and earned my Staff Sergeant's stripes doing so. This job (20,000 records) was completed in about ten months and I was again released from active duty in December 1951. My current enlistment ended in 1953 and so did my service to our military.

The next thirty years were spent in Federal law enforcement (FBI and Federal Bureau of Prisons) and the last nine administering the confinement programs for the Navy and Marine Corps all over the world and aboard major ships. I retired from that job in 1977 as Correctional Administrator GS-14 (rated base privileges equivalent to a Rear Admiral).