



Herman Charles Meier

Mike Meier
Charles Meier

Introduction

I recently completed a book, self-published, that included a number of stories about my mother, and none about the man who raised me. After talking to my brother Charlie, we felt Dad's story should be told, but we knew very little of his story. So, Charlie obtained Dad's military personnel files from the National Personnel Records Center, and he collected up personal documents Dad left us when he died, and he brought them to me. Eventually, I got around to reading through them, and as I did so I started taking notes, and this document is the result. So finally, Dad got at least a part of his story told.

My primary sources are the Official Military Personnel File, and letters, photos, and other documentation my father left us. Newspapers.com was also very useful in providing information about entries the public would have read about, such as while attending junior high taking home honorable mentions in several high-profile art contests, but also other items of relevance to Herman's life, family, and career. Wikipedia was most helpful in providing more information about the individual air bases, and for the dates and descriptions of various reference historical events I inserted into this tell.

As you read through this history you'll notice that most of the training Dad received was called "observer" training. The term "observer" goes all the



Dad, now a captain in the Air Force, is pictured in the back, on the left. The plane behind them is a B-52 and the missile under its wing is a GAM-77, which carried a nuclear weapon.



Lieutenant Meier's family. From left to right: Mike, Eddie, Mom, Charlie, and Dad. Peter hadn't been born yet.

way back to the days of World War I when the main job of the second crewman in the Jenny biplanes in use in the day was to be an observer of what was happening on the ground below and to keep an eye out for other planes in the air, and on occasion to operate a second machine gun. Over time aviation became a lot more complicated and the job of crew other than the pilots ever more varied. Still, the term "observer" was used to describe these crew members' jobs, be they radar operators, navigators, or specialists. In time, a call was sent out asking for a better term to use to describe all of these jobs, but at the time, none that were submitted seemed to fit better.

Reading and understanding what was written in many of the military memos was often difficult. First, there was the frequent use of acronyms that only another military person of that time would understand. Second, much of the writing was abbreviated almost to the point that it could not be read. For example:

21. A/3C Herman C. Meier AF13470256 (Prim AFSC-00010) (Dy AFSC-00010) (W) (RegAF) (FFSD-7 Dec 41) (DOS-Nov 56) (Non-rate - not on fly status) is rel fr asgmt and dy p/l stu 3662d Bsc Mil Tng Sq 3650th Bac Mil Tng Wg Gp 3650th Mil Tng Wg (ATRC) Sampson AFB N Y and is asg PP and WP 3605th Nav Tng Wg (ATRC) Ellington AFB Tex o/a 18 Feb 53 RUAT CONLT 21 Feb 53 or interim dy asgmt pndg ent into A/C tng. EDCSA: 1

Mar 53.

Read it a couple of times and you'll began to figure out much what was being said, but doubtfully all. I still haven't figured out what "PP and WP" mean, for example.

As you go through the timeline you'll notice that Dad initially joined the Regular US Air Force, but a year or so later resigned and joined the US Air Force Reserves. So what's the difference between the Regular Air Force and Reserves?

Reserve officers served in a sort of probationary period until promoted to Major, at which time they could become a Regular officer. In addition, Reserve officers could be separated from the force if a force reduction became necessary. And finally, Reserve officers served for only 20 years. On May 1 of 2006 this classification ended and all reserve officers became regular officers. In comparison, Regular officers could not be let go involuntarily and they could serve longer than 20 years, depending on rank.

In a number of timeline entries you will see a four digit DAFSC code. This is a Duty Air Force Specialty Code. It denotes what the airman spends most of his or her time doing, their main job. It is possible for someone to have more than one specialty code. All airmen have a PAFSC, a Primary Air Force Specialty Code, and it might be different from their DAFSC. The four-digit codes listed here are obsolete and I have not been able to find anything that would tell me what they meant.

Another military term you will see is "TDY." Translated into civilian-speak, this means "Temporary Duty," which some joke actually means "Temporary Duty over Yonder." It is a travel or other assignment at other than one's permanent station. Funds covering the cost of accommodations and such would be authorized, but only for the service member, not for family, which presumably had stayed home.