

Military History of Roland M. Valentine

Roland was born on March 11, 1936, to Anna Lucille "Pat" (Patrick) Valentine of Mapleton, Iowa, and Freeland B. "Bake" Valentine who hailed from Stubblefield, Illinois. Roland attended Manning Schools exclusively except for one year when he resided with his grandparents near Castana, Iowa. Roland graduated from Manning High School with the class of 1954 and then went to DeVry Technical Institute in Chicago to study radio and TV repair. After graduation he returned to Manning and went into partnership with William "Bill" Jensen, Jr. to open B & B-TV in the back of Bennett's Furniture Store on Main Street. Leaving the business to his partner, Roland then took employment with Radiosmith in Ralston, Nebraska, working with Merlene Thompson, MHS class of 1953. From there he moved to Clovis, New Mexico, to work at Clovis TV until he was tipped off that his draft number had been drawn.

After a quick trip to visit the Air Force recruiter and the passing of required tests he was accepted into the Aviation Cadet Program and in 1958 enlisted in the United States Air Force as an Aviation Cadet. He completed pre-flight training at Lackland Air Force Base (AFB) in Texas and upon completion reported to Harlingen AFB, Texas, for Navigator training. Upon completion of Navigator training in 1959, he was commissioned as a 2nd lieutenant and transferred to Keesler AFB in Biloxi, Mississippi, to attend the Electronic Warfare Officers School.

Upon completion of these required formal schools, Roland elected to remain at Keesler AFB as an instructor. After attending the Air Training Command Classroom Instructors course at Randolph AFB in San Antonio, Texas, he returned to Keesler as a platform instructor of basic electronics in the Electronic Warfare School. During this time he was chosen to join a small team to write and then teach a course in Electronic Countermeasures (ECM) and Electronic Counter-Countermeasures (ECCM) at all the home bases of the Military Air Transport Service (MATS). It was at one of these bases that he flew and demonstrated the first airborne radar landing approach in a C-124 using only the aircraft weather radar and locally fashioned radar corner reflectors placed at the end of the runway for that purpose. In 1961, while at Keesler AFB, he met and married Brenda J. Johnson.

At the conclusion of the MATS project, Lt. Valentine was transferred to the 39th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron (TRS) at Toul-Rosieres AB, France, as an Electronic Warfare Officer crewmember on the B-66C (later re-designated EB-66C) aircraft patrolling the East German border keeping track of radar and other electronic emissions from East Germany and other Soviet Bloc countries. As an additional duty, he was made commander of the unit's Electronic Intelligence Processing Center (EIPC) which processed the raw results of the aircraft reconnaissance missions and reported the results to higher headquarters. In 1964 he was chosen to join a small group of Electronic Warfare Officers (EWOs) to write, publish, and teach the first ECM/ECCM course taught to officers from other North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) nations. This course was conducted at the Italian Air Warfare Collage in Florence, Italy. It was during this time that his first son, Curtis Alan, was born at the army hospital at Camp Darby near Pisa, Italy.

Upon completion of the temporary duty in Italy, he returned to Toul-Rosieres AB and in 1965 was deployed to Eglin AFB Florida as project officer to test the ECM systems (jammers) on the EB-66B against the Russian radar simulators located on the

Eglin test range. During this time, his unit in France was deployed to Takhli Royal Thai Air Force Base (RTAFB), Thailand. In the course of this testing he found serious problems with the jammer settings being used by his squadron to protect the fighter strike forces over North Vietnam, so he was authorized to go to Takhli and brief the aircrews and staff, including briefing headquarters commanders at Hickam AFB, Hawaii, and Tan Son Nhut AB, Saigon, South Vietnam. While at Takhli, he flew his first combat mission to the "pocket," a small area between Hanoi, North Vietnam, and China.

In 1966, he rejoined his unit at Takhli and completed the required 100 missions "North," including one involving an attempt by two Russian built MIG-21 fighters to shoot his EB-66C down, but instead were both downed by the F-4 escort. This mission story was later featured in Esquire magazine and merited a chapter in the book Glory Days. The EB-66 aircraft were unarmed and required an armed fighter escort. As an additional duty he commanded the unit's EIPC and in his off time manned the base Military Affiliate Radio System (MARS) radios which allowed military personnel to make telephone calls home via amateur radio links.

Upon completion of his 100 missions over North Vietnam in 1968, he was assigned to the 46th Bomb Squadron (Heavy) as a crewmember (EWO) in the B-52H as part of America's nuclear alert force. During this period he was elected as president of the base Amateur Radio club. In September of 1969 he received his promotion to Major. During the stay at Grand Forks AFB his second son, Kevin Lynn, was born. After about a year's duty at Grand Forks, he received a "By Name" reassignment to the newly reactivated 39th Tactical Electronic Warfare Squadron (TEWS) at Spangdahlem AB, Germany as a crewmember in the EB-66C and EB-66E aircraft and also again as the commander of the associated Electronic Intelligence Processing Center. Also while at Spangdahlem he served as President of the base Aero Club and earned his Private Pilot's license.

In 1972, after surviving a takeoff crash in an EB-66C that resulted in total destruction of the aircraft and injuries to most of the crew, he requested and was granted a humanitarian re-assignment to the 100th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing at Davis Monthan AFB, Tucson, Arizona, to be near his mother in Phoenix, Arizona, who was in the final stages of cancer. This wing hosted a squadron of U-2 high altitude reconnaissance aircraft and DC-130 cargo aircraft that were modified to carry, airborne launch and control drone (Remotely Piloted Vehicles - RPVs).

Photo below taken March 1974 of the Recon Drone crew E-59 (number designates them as a fully combat qualified crew). A drone named "LITTLE RAT" is shown in the background, hanging from the wing of a DC-130. The parachute symbols painted on the drone depict a flight and successful mid-air catch by a CH-3 helicopter.



Back: James Taylor, George Kennedy, Chris Coan, Bob Lavendure
Front: Kyle Cundiff, Jim Hagen Bill Daus, Roland Valentine

This picture was taken on their unit's remote operating location at U-Tapao Air Base in Thailand. This unit, their DC-130, and CH-3 mid-air retrieval helicopters were co-located with U-2 high altitude reconnaissance aircraft, many B-52 bombers and KC-135 mid-air refueling tankers, and also sundry transient cargo and support aircraft...a very busy and noisy place.

Roland served as a Launch Control Officer (LCO) to program, in-flight monitor, start, and launch the drones, and later as the Remote Control Officer (RCO) to pilot the drones on numerous missions out of U-Tapao RTAFB, Thailand, accomplishing photo reconnaissance missions over heavily guarded targets in North and South Vietnam, including taking the last pictures of the fall of Saigon. He also flew drones on electronic surveillance missions out of Osan AB, Korea. While at Davis Monthan, he again became President of the base Aero Club and earned his Commercial and Instructor Pilot license.

In 1978 he retired from active duty and moved to Edwards AFB, California, to work for Boeing as a flight test mission planner and test range observer on the electronic defensive system on the prototype B-1A test aircraft, B-52 upgrade aircraft and later the B-1B production aircraft with Boeing and other Aerospace companies.

During his Air Force service career, Major Valentine received the following awards and decorations: Distinguished Flying Cross; Air Medal, 9 Oak Leaf Clusters; Air Force Commendation Medal, 2 OLC; Vietnam Service Medal; National Defense Service Medal; Good Conduct Medal; Air Force Outstanding Unit Award; Small Arms Expert Marksmanship Ribbon.