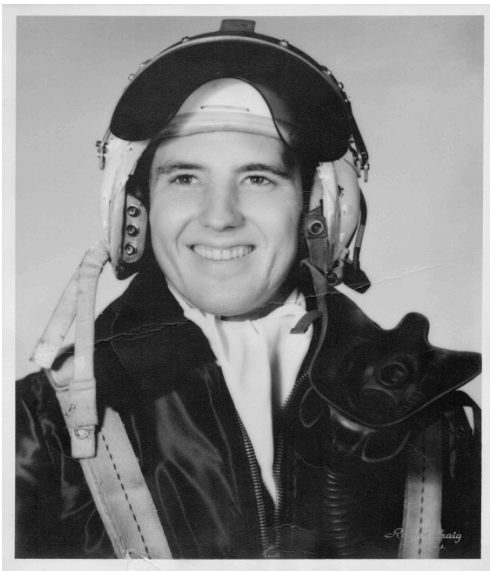




Missouri State Society Daughters of the American Revolution
Patriot of the Month
March 2013



James Richard Frank

Sponsored by:

Rachel Donelson Chapter DAR

James Richard Frank graduated from Poplar Bluff High School in 1952. He went to Southeast Missouri State for one year, then worked for the Missouri Pacific Railroad in St. Louis. Since childhood, all Jim wanted to do was fly airplanes. Due to lack of finances for lessons this dream was all but shattered early on.

Discussing flying with a friend one day he found out the Air Force had amended the requirements to go to flight training, and that was all Jim needed. Armed with his high school diploma, he entered the United States Air Force with the intent of learning to fly. After a weeklong battery of intense testing Jim was accepted. During this testing he realized his stiff little finger might be an issue, but since it was overlooked he didn't call attention to it and didn't think much of it at the time. Later on during his training he realized there was a definite need in a specific maneuver for the use of his little finger and he learned quickly how to work around this and performed his maneuvers quite efficiently.

Jim did his re-flight training at Lackland Air Force Base. He did his primary training at Stallings Air Base in North Carolina and then advanced at Bryan Air Force Base in Texas flying T-33's. Upon graduation he was commissioned as a 2nd LT.

Jim's first assignment was flying RF84's doing photo reconnaissance out of Sembach Germany. There was no armed protection on these missions, so the need to be alert and precise was a must. His next assignment was in France for two years, then back to South Carolina, Germany, and Texas.

While in France, Jim was flying the RF-101 Voodoo, a two-engine, single seat aircraft. He was scheduled to fly a training mission in the local area and during the preflight weather briefing he was assured the weather would be excellent for departure and estimated landing. On takeoff, just after breaking ground, he went into the clouds and simultaneously a warning light illuminated on the instrument panel. He shut down the left engine and climbed above the clouds. He notified control he had lost an engine on takeoff and still had a full load of fuel but would stay local to burn off fuel to get down to landing weight. Shortly after that, the fire warning light came on for the right engine. Jim checked the left engine oil pressure which had returned to normal so he restarted the left engine and shut down the right engine, which had the fire warning light still on. Jim continued to burn fuel and watch the oil pressure gage until he got to landing weight. He made a safe landing and found out later that both problems had been a result of parts failure. Other than that, it was just another normal day.

In 1969 Jim was sent to Thailand and flew missions over Vietnam where he earned one of his two Distinguished Flying Crosses. This particular mission was to fly low level photo reconnaissance over the Mu Gia Pass, the main route from North Viet Nam through Laos to South Viet Nam. It was heavily defended and Jim made four passes through to get the information needed. They could see the gun crews trying to track and fire at them on each pass, as they were flying about 100 to 200 feet from the ground. Jim was flying too fast for them to swivel their guns to accurately track and fire at him. He was also leaving a smoke trail and used the after burner which would burn the smoke and help give some cover. He says, "Our motto was 'Alone, unarmed, and unafraid' and two out of three wasn't bad!"

After Vietnam, Jim had an assignment in England, then Texas and then on to California. On one particular assignment, he was to fly a photo shoot of a group of Academy graduates who were lined up on a huge grandstand. When he asked how low they wanted him to fly he was told as low as you need to in

order to get the shot. Well, as he approached very low, ready for the photographer to make his shot he started laughing, as many of the graduates started diving off the stands thinking they were about to get hit by the plane.

When asked about flying, Jim says it was what he wanted to do and loved it. He especially liked the photo reconnaissance as you could fly by yourself and did not have to fly in formations. One thing negative about his whole experience was the lack of respect from the American people when he and other military personnel came home from Viet Nam.

When Jim retired as a Major from the military after serving from 1955 to 1975 he went back to school and graduated from St. Edwards University a Notre Dame Affiliate school with a degree in accounting and marketing and then a master's in Business. Jim found, after flying, his second greatest interest, the computer. He went to work for the US Veteran's Administration as a computer programmer in Texas where he worked until he retired in 1992.

Awards and Medals Jim earned while serving were two Distinguished Flying Crosses, ten Air Medals, Meritorious Service Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Good Conduct Medal, Small Arms Expert Marksmanship Ribbon, Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, Combat Readiness Medal, Viet Nam Service Medal, Republic of Viet Nam Campaign Medal, Air Force Longevity Service Medal, and an Outstanding Unit Award Citation.

Jim was married to Sylvia Ratcliff. They have three sons, Rick, Steve, and Jeff. Several years after her death, he reacquainted with his high school sweetheart, Mary Lou Foster, and they married. Jim's family has grown now to include Mary Lou's children Corbi and Beth, and together they have grandchildren Aaron, Christie, Jennifer, Samantha, and great-grandchildren AJ, Hunter, and Allison. Jim is a member of South Haven Baptist Church.

The Rachel Donelson Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution wish to extend our gratitude and thanks to Jim Frank for his service to our great country and are pleased to honor him as our MSSDAR Patriot of the Month.