

Fred McCaslin served 28 years in the Air Force

By: LaRAYNE WATTS

Fred McCaslin was not a Raymondite until he was thirteen years old. He was born in Columbus, Ohio, in June 1943. His mother Eleanor married Joe Basil in Olympia, Wash., in 1953, and the family moved to Raymond in the fall of 1956, just a couple months after his brother, Joe C. Basil, was born.

Fred started school in Virginia Johnson's class as an eighth grader at Raymond Junior High School.

He enjoyed his years at Raymond High School, graduating in 1961 in a class of 53. "Our teachers," he said, "were dedicated and interested in our success; the education we received in that small town was simply terrific." During his high school years he was a class officer, Honor Society member, Boys Club officer, golf team member for four years, Class speaker for graduation and a delegate to Boys' state.

When asked about his favorite teachers, Fred said, "Did I have favorite teachers? Sure, but rather than name names, I'll just say that my favorites ended up being those teachers who challenged us to learn. Those who could make it fun at the same time are at the top of the list."

After graduating from RHS, Fred attended Grays Harbor College---"off and on," he said, and graduated with an Associates degree in Liberal Arts. He joined the U.S. Air Force in April of 1966. After basic training and technical training in communications, he was sent to Guam.

In 1968 he was reassigned to Japan, where he met his wife Mitsuko. They left Japan in 1972.

Fred says that he enjoyed his work in the Air Force and the opportunity to travel overseas, so he decided to make a career of the service. The Air Force assigned him to Fairchild AFB, near Spokane, Wash., for two years. This gave him and Mitsuko a chance to visit Raymond often with their two young children, Anna and Marc. Their youngest daughter, Cathy, was born just a month before they were transferred again.

Fred's next assignment was in the Republic of the Philippines, where he began working with airborne communications on EC-130 aircraft. He was then transferred to Hickam AFB., Hawaii where the family was fortunate to stay for many years.

The family's last move was to Offutt AFB in Bellevue, Nebr., a suburb of Omaha. Fred worked as an airborne communicator for his last 20 years the Air Force in the Air Force. When he wasn't flying he helped manage and lead the operations, training, and security sections in the flying squadrons.

Fred retired from the Air Force 1994 as a Chief Master Sergeant with 28 years of service. After his retirement he went back to college and earned a Bachelors' Degree in Technical Management.

Fred and his wife still live in Bellevue, where he currently works as a systems engineer for a military contractor supporting U. S. Strategic Command at Offutt AFB. His two daughters live and work in nearby Omaha. His son Marc, who has a wife and two daughters, also joined the Air Force, and is stationed at Travis AFB in California.

Fred returns to Raymond two or three times a year to visit family and friends. His dad, Joe Basil, still lives in the family home at 320 Fourteenth Street. Unfortunately, his mother, Eleanor, passed away in November 1999 of cancer. His brother Joe continues to live in Raymond, working at the Raymond Fire Department as Fire Captain and paramedic.

Fred says, "My Air Force career took me to over fifty countries in every corner of the globe. I was fortunate to see people and places I only dreamed of as a young man. But through it all, Raymond has always been the greatest place in the world. When I left to join the Air Force that rainy night in April 1964, I couldn't imagine I would never live there again. It is one of life's great disappointments."

When asked what his advice to this years seniors would be, Frank replied, "Growing up in a small town, with family, classmates, friends, and neighbors was one of life's great experiences. RHS was central to that experience. Our old school building may have been too run down, but the spirit and goodness of the people of Raymond go on and that's what makes it such a special place to me. It's always great to come home again."



RHS Alumnus Fred McCaslin, 1961