

Hi! I'm John W. Clark a Major in the U.S. Air Force. I was Born on 1 Jan 1940 in Columbia Mo. and lived there for 22 years. I have two sisters, one older and one younger, named Kathryn and Venona respectively. I was a graduate of Hickman High School in Columbia where I played football & ran track. My father is a Professor in the Agricultural Extension Department of the University of Missouri and mom is on the Stephens College Faculty.

As a young man I enjoyed cars and water skiing when I could and flying later in college. During those summers I spent many days working on my dad's farm in North Mo. and that provided many thoughts during my stay with the communists.

I graduated from high school in 1957, entered some college of Engineering and pledged Phi Delta Theta Social fraternity. In Feb. 1962 I married my wife Bonnie and entered the Air Force shortly after graduation in June of that year. My first tour of duty was at Reese AFB Texas where I attended pilot training and flew the T-33 and T-37. During this year my daughter Renee was born and after graduation I was assigned to the Air Evac Squadron at Mc Guire AFB and flew the C-131. In Feb of 1965 I entered the RF-4C combat crew training School at Shaw AFB S.C. and upon completion went to Alconbury AB England with my family to join the 1st Tactical Reconnaissance Sq. It was from there that I was sent to Udon Thailand in September of 1966 leaving my family in Columbia Mo.

I had flown more than 60 missions over NVN when I was downed by AAA on 12 March 1967 in western Hoa Bin province of NVN. I was captured almost immediately by swarms of militia. I remained in NVN for almost 6 years during which time I contracted malaria.

I was released in Feb 1973 and met my son Keith for the first time at Scott AFB ILL where I was being treated for the malaria. It is now cured but a period of time is required for the body to rebuild itself.

During my visit to NVN I fell back on three faiths. Faith in God, Country, and family. I developed a rewarding and strengthened faith in God and I thank God for being American. For regardless of what "they" said or how hopeless the situation might seem at times I knew I was never forgotten or abandoned. However I still find it hard to comprehend the national emotion on the POW issue. I never ~~imagined~~ imagined it to be as I found it when I returned. Fantastic!!

Our communications with each other and faith in each other along with our great sense of national pride made it easy to remain united against the red wedge that tried to split us. And "they" never understood.

For the future I plan to remain in the Air Force and attend the U. of Mo. at Columbia for a masters degree in Engineering.

I have come to appreciate my freedoms as an American so much more and to no longer ~~take~~ take for granted the great affluence of our society. I pray that others will not have to suffer to really appreciate Being American. John W. Clark