

272nd EI History
by
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The 272nd Electronic Engineering Squadron (EIS) was located in LaPorte, Texas when I started there as the Officer in Charge (OIC) of Logistics in early 1989. Lt.Col. Hans Crosthwait was the commander and the base detachment commander was Maj. John Daniel. The senior enlisted member was Chief Charles Sullenger, who had been one of the people who had been in the 273rd EIS, our sister unit, when it started. I was a captain, just off of active duty, and my Non-Commissioned Office in Charge (NCOIC) was MSgt. Charlie Marsh.

People in the E&I community quickly figured out that our Air National Guard (ANG) Squadrons had a powerful advantage and a powerful disadvantage. Our strength was in the vast experience that many of our folks brought to the unit - after having frequently served in the active duty military and also in many companies doing a job that was equivalent to engineering installation. Our downfall was the divided chain of command, where the military chain of command was often competitive to the civilian chain of command, as the technicians had different goals than the military unit.

This rapidly was apparent when we had an inspection shortly after I arrived (about August 1989), and we failed it decisively. That resulted in a quick series of retirements, as Chief Sullenger and some of the other squadron senior enlisted folks had to go. I had braced for this event, since my NCOIC had moved to the 273rd EIS right before the inspection, and I knew he didn't want to be there for a good reason. After that we gained Maj. Dale Ruckman, who had been an F-4 Weapon Systems Operator (WSO) at Ellington ANG Base. For a while he and I were in the same slot, and I agreed to be the overage so he could get promoted. I think we gained Chief Dennis Kendall at that time, to replace Chief Sullenger. To replace my NCOIC, we hired MSgt Norma Colunga as NCOIC of logistics.

Now back to Maj. Daniels. In late 1991 Lt. Col. Crosthwait retired and (now) Lt. Col. Dale Ruckman took over as Commander. Maj. Daniels apparently was not ready to retire at the time, so Lt.Col. Ruckman wrote a letter to HQ AGTX (headquarter of Air National Guard of Texas) that asked for me to be promoted early. I had been selected for the rank of major, with a promotion date of May 12, 1992, but his letter accelerated that to March 1992, and the limitations of the Unit Manning Document forced Maj. Daniels to retire. To replace him, we selected Maj. Bill Jones, another former F-4 WSO from Ellington ANG Base.

Lt. Col. Ruckman retired approximately December 1998, after I had been selected for Lt. Col. To replace him, we moved Maj. Mark Adams up (I was happy about that since my wife and I had just had triplet boys and we were very busy at home!!). I moved to the AF Reserve and worked as a Category E reservist for a few years before getting an assignment at the Oklahoma City Air Logistics Center, which allowed me to go visit what remained of the 38th Engineering Installation Wing (as it was called for a while) there at Tinker AFB. When I last visited, they still had a lot of their engineering responsibilities.

In my first year, we were preparing for REFORGER the next summer, but due to budget restrictions it was cancelled. Little did we know that soon we would be very involved in backfilling for active duty E&I teams that were sent to Kuwait, and soon after, Iraq. I joined a squadron that was focused on Europe (and to a smaller degree, the Pacific) and departed when the squadron was very focused on Southwest Asia.

During my ten years in engineering installation, we saw a steady decline in the size of our Squadron as we lost teams almost every year. Yet we had a large backlog of workload, there was always a lot of work for the E&I community all over the world.