

Jerome Montgomery reflects on 33 years of military service

By Autumn VanMeter
Staff Writer

Jerome Montgomery doesn't sugarcoat his story.

"What inspired me to enlist? To get the hell away from home," he said with a laugh.

What began as a young man's search for opportunity became a military career spanning the U.S. Army, U.S. Air Force and Oklahoma Air National Guard.

Montgomery retired as a chief master sergeant after more than 33 years of military service. Looking back, he said his decision to enlist was driven by a desire to build a future for himself.

"You know it's a double-bladed sword. When you're at a place where there's no jobs, and ain't no doggone career, you know, humans, the Homo sapiens, we want to survive, and you don't survive by running up and down the creek, unless you are a professional hunter, so you know to get a job and to have a career to make a life for yourself," Montgomery said.

A native of Okemah, Montgomery was active in 4-H throughout his youth and earned a scholarship to Oklahoma State University. He ultimately chose a different path and enlisted in the Army at age 17.



Jerome Montgomery served 33 years in the Army, Air Force and Oklahoma Air National Guard.

PHOTO BY JEFF HARRISON

"I figured \$300 I'd go through that like a cowboy does a loaf of bread," he said.

Montgomery began his military career at Fort Carson, Colorado, in 1958 before serving nearly three years in Germany during the Cold War. Assigned to Army Air Defense Command, he worked with Nike missile systems and artillery units before being discharged in 1962 from Fort Hamilton, New York.

After returning home, Montgomery briefly worked for his father before enlisting in the

Air Force. He trained as a radar technician at Keesler Air Force Base and later flew aboard EC-121 Constellation aircraft, helping maintain early warning radar systems over the Atlantic Ocean.

Following four years in the Air Force, Montgomery joined the Oklahoma Air National Guard, where he served another 26 years. His work focused on communications, radar and navigation systems, and he eventually retired as a chief master sergeant.

The technical skills he developed in uniform led to a successful civilian career with the Federal Aviation Administration. Montgomery worked as an electronics technician before becoming an instructor at the FAA Academy in Oklahoma City, training future FAA specialists and air traffic support personnel.

When asked what accomplishment makes him most proud, Montgomery pointed not to rank or recognition but to fulfilling his duty.

"Matter of fact, I guess, in terms of the big picture, the mere fact that I was there when the military needed me, I did my job to protect our country, and I protected the Constitution and our way of life," he said.

"And so, after 33 plus years,



Jerome Montgomery and his wife Patsy in 1995. PHOTO PROVIDED

counting the Army time, Air Force time, and Air Guard time, I was very, very proud, because I did all in both branches of service. I did a massive amount of different things. God, it was as different as night and day, you know."

Today, Montgomery remains active with the Midwest City Elks Lodge, where he participates in community service and youth

programs.

"I got involved because it is a community service," he said.

Among the lodge's efforts is an annual Christmas food program that provides assistance to local families. Montgomery also helps coordinate Americanism programs that encourage students to write essays about citizenship and patriotism.



Bill Hart

Spec 4 William "Bill" Hart served in the U.S. Army from 1965 to 1967. During his service, he was stationed in Texas and Georgia and deployed to Vietnam with the 167th Signal Company.



Brian VanCuren

Maj. Brian VanCuren joined the U.S. Air Force in 2012 at Tinker Air Force Base and continues to serve on active duty.



Shannon Flipps

SMSgt Shannon Fipps served in the U.S. Air Force from 1985 to 2012. During his career, he was stationed in Germany, Alabama, North Carolina and at Tinker AFB, where he arrived in 1997.



David Niles

LCpl. David Niles served in the U.S. Marine Corps from 1995 to 1998. His duty stations included Okinawa, Japan, and Camp Pendleton, California.



Mike Dussault

MSgt Mike Dussault (Retired) served in the U.S. Air Force from 1975 to 1995. He is a Desert Storm veteran and was stationed in California, South Dakota, Alaska, Iceland, and at Tinker AFB.