

Colonel (Ret) Joe B. Swift

Colonel Joe B. Swift graduated from North Dallas High School. He attended Arlington State College and was a member of the Corps of Cadets. He was on the nationally recognized championship Rifle Team. He graduated in January 1963 as a Distinguished Military Graduate with a Bachelor of Business Administration degree and was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant in the Infantry.

After Infantry Officer Basic Course and Airborne School, Swift was assigned to Fort Carson, CO, as Platoon Leader, Motor Officer, and then Company Executive Officer with the 5th Infantry Division. He joined the Post Marksmanship Training Unit Rifle Team, which won state and Army competitions. At the 5th Army matches he was selected to shoot on the 5th Army Team and then the All-Army Team. Not wanting to serve his entire career on Marksmanship Teams, he volunteered for Vietnam.

Instead of Vietnam, he was sent to Korea in January 1965, where he was put in charge of various 7th Infantry Division rifle and pistol training activities, and also training units of the 1st Cavalry Division, 2nd Infantry Division, plus Air Force and Korean Units. In his spare time he taught English in a local Korean orphanage as a volunteer. He also took up skydiving and after several jumps, was injured. At that point, Colonel Swift applied for flight school and was accepted.

He was sent to the Army Aviation School at Fort Rucker, AL, and assigned to Fixed Wing Training. He graduated in 1967 with a commercial license for fixed wing, single engine, multi engine and instrument rating, and was sent to Vietnam. There he flew eight hours a day doing recon and artillery fire adjustment, and directing helicopter gunships or high performance aircraft putting in air strikes.

Colonel Swift returned to Fort Rucker where he attended the Rotary Wing Transition Course. After attending the Infantry Officers Advanced Course, he found himself back in Vietnam where he was assigned to the 1st Aviation Brigade flying missions throughout the Central Highlands over to, and into, Cambodia. After six months he was assigned to Tuy Hoa where he flew mostly administrative missions, but also accomplished test flights using his dual fix and rotary wing training.

In late 1968 he was assigned to U.S. Army Headquarters, Europe, where he was mostly assigned to Operations Officer positions. He successfully qualified for the National Ski Patrol and patrolled the Heidelberg Ski Club trips for several years. He also earned a Masters degree in Industrial Psychology.

His next assignment sent him to Fort Lewis, WA, where he was assigned to the 10th Aviation Battalion. He was assigned to the Standardization Branch where he helped train Army, National Guard, Air Force, and some DOD civilian units in many northwestern areas of the U.S.

Colonel Swift left active duty in March 1978 and joined a Reserve Training Unit in Dallas, TX as a Training Officer. He did annual training as the Operations Officer in 5th Army Headquarters at Fort Sam Houston, TX. After 31 years of active and reserve duty, Colonel Swift retired from the military in 1994. Among his military awards are the Legion of Merit, two Distinguished Flying Crosses, 32 Air Medals, one with a V device, and the Purple Heart.

After leaving the Army he worked for Aerospatiale Helicopter Corporations in Grand Prairie, TX, managing 53 service facilities throughout the United States and Canada. He retired in 1989 and moved to Seattle, where he managed his own small tool distribution company. In 1996 he returned to Arlington to work with Bell Helicopter as a Logistic Engineer. His final job at Bell was as the engineer responsible for writing all maintenance plans, repair plans, and inspection procedures for the V-22 Osprey drive shafts and gear boxes. He retired again in 2004.

Colonel Swift now stays busy as a volunteer at the Frontiers of Flight Museum in Dallas, and making presentations to public libraries and local elementary schools concerning helicopter technologies. He assists his wife Betty in her work as a Court Appointed Special Advocate. He is active in the St. Barnabas United Methodist Church and shoots weekly in a skeet and trap league. Colonel Swift and his wife live in Arlington, TX. They have three sons, a daughter and eight grandchildren.