

Biographical Info for Michoacan to Michigan Project

Daniel E. Fraga

Retired 1992, Systems Integration Engineer in B-2 Systems Program Office, Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio

Biographical info -

Graduated from Wayne State University in 1961 with Bachelor of Science degree in Aeronautical Engineering.

2 years in the Army, 1954 to 1956. After basic training was assigned to Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, Texas to work as clerk in a medical dispensary. After a year there, volunteered for assignment to Europe. Spent the first couple of months with the 2nd Armored Cav in personnel in Nuremberg, Germany. As that unit transferred back to the states, I was assigned to the 142nd Armored Signal Corp in Bad Kreuznach, Germany where I worked as the Motor Pool Dispatcher. Because of my service I was able to get the GI Bill which allowed me to get go to college and get my Degree.

Have volunteered as a tour guide and handyman helper at the SunWatch Indian Village/ Archaeology Park since 1993. This is a museum and partially reconstructed Native American site that was occupied 700 to 800 years ago.

My work history is going to cover a lot of material because as I began remembering my various jobs as I was growing up, it soon became apparent that my family had played a huge role in helping me through my early years. Something that I had not fully realized or acknowledged before. I took a lot of that help at the time for granted, not realizing how special that it was. The wonderful thing about our family is that they were always there when you needed them and they never made a big fuss about it, they just did it. I was very lucky as the youngest to be able to reap some the benefits of the successes of my brothers and sisters.

Living on a dairy farm, we had chores to do from whenever we were old enough to do them, such as milking the cows, feeding them, cleaning the manure, etc. Typically in mid summer we had free time so Martin and I started working for different types of farmers, those that grew mints or sugar beets or various produce like carrots, onions, etc. that required thinning and weeding. Our first working summer was when Martin was 16 and old enough to drive the family car and I was 12. We made 50 cents an hour. I was able to save \$25 that first summer which I used several months later to buy a car. Our brother-in-law Ambrose Assessor (Ellen's husband) had been storing his old 1927 Plymouth in a building at the Claude Wood farm and he was trying to get rid of it, so I offered him the \$25 that I had and he took it. I thought it was neat owning a car, but at 12 or 13 years old there wasn't much I could

do with it. However, it did come in handy. We used it the the next summer when Martin and I worked in the fields again. It was also handy later when Martin quit high school around his junior year, left the farm and went to work in a factory in Flint. He eventually paid me back my \$25.

Not long after Martin left we moved to the Norman Rd farm and Dad let me know that with us just getting started in this new farm, there wasn't going to be much money to help me with my junior and senior year high school expenses so I continued to work in the summers for these other farms on my own. I used the money I earned to buy clothes for school. My nephew Richard Valdez from Detroit (who was 4 months younger) was able to guide me in buying some real cool clothes. I also used the money to buy some of my school books and for other important expenses like dating.

When I graduated from Imlay City HS in 1953 my objective was to follow in my brother Jesse's path (He was my only brother that graduated from High school). He had gone to the Walsh Institute of Accounting in Detroit and I planned to also enroll. However, I had to earn enough money to pay the tuition. Here's where my family began to help me in so many ways. Joe got me a job for that summer with Bitucrete Asphalt company that he had worked with and Paul provided me with a place to live with his family in Hazel Park. After I enrolled in Walsh in the Fall I went to live with Jesse and Pauline in her mother's house. Later that year, during Christmas break, Jesse got me a job for a couple of weeks at the Nu Car company that he worked at. However, when the first semester at Walsh came to an end, I decided to go to the farm for the weekend after taking a couple of the final exams. While I was there I realized that I did not want to pursue a career in accounting, so I never went back to finish the final exams. I stayed on at the farm with no plan B. As I was approaching my 18th birthday it occurred to me that since I had no other plan, why not volunteer for the draft and get that out of the way. Volunteering for the draft was not the same as enlisting in the Army. If you enlisted you had to serve for 4 years, if you were drafted you only had to serve 2 years. I've often said that, inadvertently, this was the smartest decision I ever made because the GI bill (which I used to go to college) was eliminated about 8 months after I was inducted. While I was in the Army I was able to take advantage of my locations. When I was in Texas I was able to spend a couple of days in Nuevo Laredo In Mexico. When I was In Germany I used a 3 day pass to go to Paris and to visit with my nephew Richard who was in the Air Force and stationed nearby. Also when I was in Germany, me and a couple of friends got some military hops to London and Spain. So all in all it was time well spent.

I was discharged from the army on April 27, 1956 and went to stay with my folks at the Norman Rd farm to make some plans for my future. While there, I had the good fortune of renewing my acquaintance with Helen Tank from Almont and we started dating. She eventually become my wife and mother of our wonderful children. This story is addressed elsewhere. I had no great plans at the time, but I knew I had to get a job to support myself. My sister Carmen offered me a place to stay with her family in Detroit and my brother John got me a job with some construction company. After working there for a couple of weeks it became apparent to me that this was not a real job, but that they were doing my brother a favor. This made me

uncomfortable so I started looking for another job. I made the mistake of quitting my this old job prematurely because I thought I had been hired elsewhere. I spent a couple of weeks unemployed going through the want ads and applying for various jobs. I finally got lucky and landed a great white collar job as a Statistical Clerk for The Chrysler Marketing Office. It was a well paying job and I was able to start paying Carmen a monthly amount for giving me a place to stay and feeding me. We also had the opportunity for many great discussions.

This good job had me briefly reconsidering college, but that quickly passed, however, before I would be accepted in the Engineering College at Wayne State University, I didn't have all of the necessary prerequisites so I had to take a night school course in Plane Geometry. In September 1957 I quit my job and enrolled in college. During this period I was also courting my future bride Helen Tank. We were married the next year in August 1958, just before I started my Sophomore year in college. During the summers when I was in college I had to work to make enough money to supplement the GI Bill and cover various bills. Here again I got plenty of help. The summer after my Freshman year I lived on the farm and I worked in an orchard farm in Almont that was owned by Gilbert Bristol, the husband of Helen's good friend Joan Milan. The next summer after we were married we stayed with Helen's parents in Almont and Helen's father, Earl Tank who was the village manager hired me to work for the village doing various construction and maintenance jobs. The last summer, prior to my Senior year we stayed in our apartment in Detroit and I worked as a student assistant for some biomechanic projects at the college.

Upon graduating with a BS degree in Aeronautical Engineering in June 1961 I again needed some family support. My Dad cosigned a loan for me so we could get a car and Paul loaned me some money so we could get started in our new location in Dayton OH. The wonderful thing about our family that I was large recipient of, was the fact that you never felt you were facing problems alone. There was always some family member that was going to help you when you needed it.

With my degree in Aeronautical Engineering I went to work initially for the Aeronautical Systems Division at Wright-Patterson AFB. My responsibilities were to evaluate system capabilities in performance and aerodynamics for helicopters and V/STOL aircraft. After over 5 years there I went to work for the Air Force Flight Dynamics Laboratory (AFFDL). Where I spent several years responsible for various studies for advanced air vehicle technologies. This eventually led to studies investigating the design and effectiveness of Low Observable Air Vehicles (Stealth concepts). After about 14 years I went to work in the B-1B Program Office in June 1981 as Systems Integration Engineer responsible for the development and integration of low observable features into the B-1B. In January 1987 I started working for the B-2 System Program Office which was a Top Secret, Special Access Required (SAR) Program at the time. I worked in the Engineering Integration Branch and worked there until I retired in June 1992.

Statement about what family means to you.

My parents instilled in us the importance of family, which is reflected in something that our father said when he was commenting on their journey to this country and the hardships they faced, "We don't care for us, we suffered, but we suffered for our family" and he went on to indicate how proud they were of how well we were all doing. Their sense of pride and fulfillment came from our success, which was a great motivator and a great character builder as well. After what they had endured, whatever obstacles that we may have faced didn't seem that significant. In addition, we always knew that if we needed help, we always had a family that would provide it.

A footnote here. The feeling that our parents expressed with regard to suffering for their family, I see reflected in the families on our borders today that Trump constantly insults by trying to criminalize them.

Any other information you'd like to list

Very proud of the achievements and the families of our children.
