

BIOGRAPHY

CHANUTE AIR FORCE BASE HISTORIAN: Donald O. Weckhorst was born 4 February 1932 in Appleton, Minnesota. He enlisted in the Air Force in January 1951. He earned associate degrees in Liberal Arts from Saint Leo College and Work Center Management from the Community College of the Air Force. He subsequently earned Bachelor and Master of Science degrees in Career Occupations and Technology Education in 1977 and 1980, both from Eastern Illinois University.

Following basic training at Lackland AFB, Texas, he completed the Aircraft and Engine Mechanics School at Sheppard AFB, Texas and Aircraft Hydraulics Course at Chanute AFB, Illinois. During his 30-year Air Force career, his assignments at several U.S. bases, Japan and Germany included: 10 years as aircraft mechanic, 8 years instructor duty teaching Atlas Hydraulic and Titan III missile propulsion systems, 5 years with USAF Recruiting Service, 3 years instructor duty at the Tactical Air Command NCO Academy and 4 years as Senior Enlisted Advisor at Chanute AFB. He retired from active duty on 30 September 1980 in the grade of Chief Master Sergeant. In addition to completing numerous advanced technical training courses on aircraft and missile systems, he completed several professional development courses. They include the ATC Technical Instructor Course, USAF Recruiter School, TAC NCO Academy, USAF Senior NCO Academy, USAF Academic Instructor Course, and in 1976 he earned the prestigious Certified Manager certification from the Institute of Certified Professional Managers.

Immediately after retiring from the Air Force, he joined the Parkland Community College instructor staff. As a member of the affiliate faculty, he teaches management courses two evenings per week at off-campus satellite locations. In 1981, he started a second career with the Air Force as a civil service instructor in Chanute's Automotive Mechanics School. He became Chanute's Historian in 1983. He has authored numerous scholarly papers, weekly news column and special studies for the Air Force. They include: Position Papers on Management, Sensitivity to Nonverbal Communication, Chanute AFB Seventy Year History, Chanute AFB Aircraft History Roll Call, Chanute AFB Memorialization of Place and Street Names, and the history of organizational Command and Control in Air Training Command.

His hobby is restoring antique Model A Fords and Mustangs. He is a member of Kappa Delta Pi, an honor society in education, Chanute's Speakers Bureau and the past president of the Air Force Association Illini Chapter. He is the founder/charter member of The Antique Auto Club of Cape Canaveral, Florida, the Egyptian Antique Auto Club of Southern Illinois and the Chanute Heritage Foundation. He considers his nine year research and publication of Chanute's 75-Year Pictorial History to be the highlight of his two Air Force careers. After Chanute AFB closes in 1993, he plans to continue teaching and assist the central Illinois community in developing and maintaining the Octave Chanute Aerospace Museum and Air Park.

Chief Weckhorst is married to the former Marie Doudera, of Alma, Illinois. They have three sons, Donald (USAF Major, F-16 Pilot) David (Pressman at Champaign-Urbana News Gazette) and Dale (Sales Supervisor for Tombstone Pizza) and two grandchildren. He resides with his wife in Paxton, Illinois.

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