

A Biography of Opportunity and AMVET Life
for Darrel Tucker
Department of Illinois Commander 2018 – 2019

I would like to thank everyone for their support and encouragement in becoming the Department of Illinois Commander. I know there will be challenges in the upcoming year in membership, program reporting and finances. However, I believe this organization can overcome any difficulties and succeed in every area with the help and dedication of us all!

I was born in Topeka, Kansas, and my family moved to Twin Falls, Idaho, when I was two years old. I grew up in Twin Falls, living in a one-room log cabin, similar to the one Abraham Lincoln lived in, with my mother and older brother. When I was eight, my brother, stepfather and I worked to convert the log cabin into a house, with running water, a bathroom, two bedrooms and central heat.

I graduated from Twin Falls High School in 1965 and went to a Junior College for a year. When Uncle Sam said, "I want you" (probably for Viet Nam), I joined the US Air Force. After a year of training at Chanute AFB learning to repair and fly flight simulators (during this time, I met my wife-to-be from Mattoon), my orders were to report to Reese Air Force Base, Lubbock, Texas. I then became an Instrument Trainer Instructor; teaching student pilots how to fly the T-38 aircraft, a small supersonic jet that flies like a bullet at mock 1.3.

I have been blessed in my marriage to my wife Mitchi; this year is our 50th wedding anniversary. I am the father of two wonderful girls, Beth and Ginny. At the time of our marriage, my wife was attending Eastern Illinois University, and then she transferred to Texas Tech University to obtain her teaching degree in English, Speech and French. Afterward, she started teaching and working on her "PHT Degree" (Putting Hubby Through) when I got out of the Air Force and went back to school at Texas Tech University to earn a Bachelor of Science degree in Electrical Engineering. I graduated in 1973, and returned to Illinois to work as a Service Area Engineer for Illinois Power in Mt. Vernon, Illinois.

In 1977, I accepted a transfer to Headquarters in Decatur, Illinois, working as a Distribution Design Engineer. After a short period in this position, I was asked if I would be interested in working as a Manager at the newly announced nuclear plant that the company was building. So in 1978, I entered the field of nuclear power at Clinton Power Station (CPS). It was my career for almost 40 years. One example of my nuclear walk was in 1980, when the plant manager asked that I go to California to help with the assembly and factory testing of the plant's Main Control Room, or PGCC (Power Generation Control Complex). My wife, two daughters and our Irish setter packed up the station wagon and went to San Jose, California, for almost a year. After California, we then made the official move to Clinton, Illinois, where I began working at CPS. Mitchi and I have lived in Clinton for nearly 38 years. I must add that our family has continued to grow; I am now the proud grandfather of five (ranging from age 27 to age 16).

My experiences with AMVETS have become a wonderful part of both my life and my

wife's. I joined in 2002, and then became a Life Member in 2008. My early AMVETS activities were very limited due to the demands of my work at CPS. Then after retiring in 2008, and my return from working at a nuclear plant in South Carolina, I became much more active. I "volunteered" to become the Finance Officer of our Post after the resignation of the Finance Officer. Our Post finances became more structured, and our Post went from a time of going from check-to-check to having a budget and managing to save enough money to procure a building. We have great plans for Post 14 with the promise of an Illinois Grant, from which we have yet to see the \$\$\$\$\$. Besides being the Adjutant of District IV, I have also become the Post 14 Publicity Officer and enjoy BRAGGING about how dedicated all the Post 14 members are towards both the Post and Veterans. Over the years, Post 14 has gone from just a few attending to an average of 15 people at our monthly meetings. I attribute this to the ENERGY we have developed as well as our VISIBILITY in the community and state. One of the highlights for our Post last year was to host the School of Instruction picnic.

Over the past few years, I have gone through the chairs at both the District and Department levels. I have learned so much during each one of these positions and know I have even more to learn. My wife and I have both been highly honored in recent years for our work in the AMVETS organization. Mitchi was selected as the State of Illinois AMVETS Outstanding Individual Recognition Award for 2016 – 2017, and I was selected as the State of Illinois Outstanding AMVET of the Year for the period of 2014 – 2015. These honors have humbled both of us and have made us even more aware of how important it is to work hard for and be an example to both the AMVETS and other Veterans. Last year, I was selected to be one of the National Deputy Provost Marshalls, which also allows me to keep informed at the National level. As a result of my election as Commander of the State of Illinois, I hereto resolve to always do my best in serving this organization that I love and in accepting my Post, District, State and National responsibilities.

May God Bless America and our wonderful AMVETS organization!!!