



John Nelson Class of 2014

Major John W. Nelson, USAF Retired, is a native of Oroville. He graduated from Oroville High School (OHS) in 1964. John was active in sports at OHS, playing football 4 years, basketball 3 years and running track 1 year. He was a member of Block O all 4 years. In 1962, John scored the first touchdown in the 1st Victory Bell Game, won by OHS by a score of 12-0. In 1964, he was selected to play in the NORCAL All-Star Optimist Game in Sacramento. There, he kicked the game's first ever field goal with a 27-yard boot setting a record that stood for many years. While a student, John was a Boy Scout, worked as a drug store delivery boy, and worked as a box boy at Currier Brothers Market. Upon graduation, he was awarded an athletic scholarship to Brigham Young University (BYU).

John earned his BA degree in Political Science and Aero Space studies at BYU and was in the Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) for 4 years. He was also on the BYU freshman football team. He earned his master's degree in Public Administration from Golden Gate University, while stationed at Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada.

From 1968-1988, John served in the United States Air Force (USAF) in a variety of organizations and locations around the world. His 20-year military career began at Travis AFB where he earned the Air Force Commendation Medal for outstanding service. He then went to Viet Nam and was awarded the Bronze Star Medal for operations against an opposing armed force. During John's career he served as an Executive Officer, Missile Launch Officer, Contracting and Logistics Officer and Vice Commander of Wake Island AFB.

In 1969, John escorted the body of Barry Unfried, USMC, killed in action in Viet Nam, home to Oroville. He also escorted Captain Wesley Rumble, USAF, home after his release as a POW in North Viet Nam.

John was assigned to the 4477 Test and Evaluation Squadron (*Red Eagles*) from 1980-1985, when they were twice awarded the Joint Meritorious Unit Citation, our country's highest unit award. The squadron flew over 15,000 MIG sorties and trained over 5,900 USAF, Navy and Marine aircrews. To this day, it was and is, the most advanced air combat training program undertaken by the United States Military.

Upon retirement in 1988, John was awarded the Air Force Meritorious Service Medal, first oak leaf cluster for outstanding service. He retired as a Major and wears that rank with particular honor as detailed in the book, "America's Secret MIG Squadron." John is the only US military officer to ever take the Oath of Office in an operational MIG-23 aircraft.

Following his retirement from the USAF, John worked from 1988-1991 in the Marriott Hotel Organization, when he was hired directly by owner, Bill Marriott. As Director of Services, he was given the opportunity to work at any hotel in the organization. John chose to work at the Marriott Hotels in Albuquerque, NM and El Paso, TX.

From 1991 to 2014, John worked as a contractor to the United States Department of Energy for the sole purpose of supporting the Nevada Test Site (NTS) now known as the Nevada National Security Site (NNSS) working for Reynolds Electrical and Engineering, Bechtel-Nevada, and National Security Technologies. Based upon his unique background experience he was selected to be a Senior Operations Specialist in an exclusive department writing specific plans detailing protective operations for Presidential Inaugurations and State of the Union Addresses. Additionally, his work included

training Federal, State and local law enforcement agencies across the country in Counter Terrorism Tactics. He was also involved in developing specific security plans for the 2002 Salt Lake City Winter Olympics. More recently, he provided logistical support for the US Department of Energy's participation and interests in Japan following the tsunami and Fukushima Daiichi nuclear incident in March 2011.

John has been active in Las Vegas Police and Fire Citizens Academies, Boy Scouts of America leadership positions and directed his company's efforts in supporting annual charity events including the North Las Vegas Police Department's Shop with a Cop, Salvation Army Angel Tree and the US Marine Corps' Toys for Tots.

John and his wife of 36 years, Susan, live in Las Vegas, NV and have 3 children and 4 grandchildren.