

James Orr Pampa High School Class of 1952



Jim (whenever someone asks for “Jimmy” he knows that it’s either a relative or someone from Pampa) was born outside Seminole, Oklahoma on January 22, 1935 to Robert and Annelle Orr. When he was six months old, the family moved to the Phillips Pampa camp ten miles south of town. That house was his home for the next seventeen years. His only sibling, Martha, graduated from PHS in 1940. Her class was the last to graduate from the downtown building which became Pampa Junior High. Jim attended Hopkins School in the camp, along with such luminaries as Harold Courson, Alma Ruth Alverson McBride, Neva Lynn Cox Davis-Wright, James, Dick and Alice Seawright, Marva Su Stone, and several others whose names have faded from his failing memory. Marvin Bond lived at the Cabot camp a couple of miles away, Chuck Broyles lived in another camp a few miles toward Lefors, and Jimmy Smith moved to the camp for PJHS and PHS. They all rode the bus into PJHS and PHS for the eighth through twelfth grades. At PJHS, Jim was salutatorian (Blaine Johnson was valedictorian), and moved on to PHS.

At PHS, Jim got involved in a lot of activities, including Mixed Chorus and A Cappella Choir, Hi-Y, class plays, Student Council, and intramurals, and held offices in most of the activities in which he participated. He was inducted into the National Honor Society in his junior year, and in 1951 he represented Pampa at Lone Star Boys’ State. When graduation came, he had the misfortune to be in a class with some really bright girls, so they made up a category for him called Highest Ranking Boy. He attended Sunday school and church at the First Presbyterian Church which still stands on Gray Street. In addition to his parents a lot of faculty members and other adults had a lasting influence on him. Sheriff Rufe Jordan and Rev. Doug Nelson taught him that character matters. Bill Hopkins, John Plaster, Mrs. Norman, Wayne Cox and Johnnie Douglas inculcated a love of science and mathematics. Eloise Lane and Ken Baumgardner instilled a love of vocal music that endures to this day. Jack Edmondson, Cameron Marsh and Warren Hasse made him understand that service to his country was a fundamental duty of every citizen. Miles Morgan taught him the pride of a job well done. Bill Hopkins and Coach Tripp threatened to whip him behind the gym if he joined the Marine Corps out of high school and didn’t pursue his college opportunity. He also owes Pat Ellis Marlin, whose birthday is in March, for keeping him from being the youngest member of the ’52 class.

At Rice Institute (now Rice University) Jim matriculated on a Naval ROTC scholarship. He participated in a number of extracurricular activities and graduated in 1957 with BS and BA degrees in Civil Engineering. The best part of his Rice experience was meeting his supermodel look-alike wife, the former Elizabeth

Todd of Beaumont. Since the Navy had paid for his education, he owed them three years, and he chose to serve it in the Marine Corps. He got the opportunity to go to flight training, and spent the next 20-some years traveling the world and flying the world's finest airplanes. He spent three years in Hawaii and did a Mediterranean cruise aboard the aircraft carrier USS Saratoga. He had two tours in Vietnam, the second flying combat missions in the A-6 Intruder. He completed the U. S. Naval Test Pilot School where he was top student in the class. He did two tours as a test pilot. He flew the unique vertical takeoff and landing Harrier jet in its early trials and commanded the Marine Corps' first Harrier squadron. He accumulated over 5,000 hours of flight time and hundreds of carrier landings (many at night) in heaven knows how many types of aircraft. He is a member of the prestigious Society of Experimental Test Pilots. He graduated with honors from the Naval War College and the Defense Systems Management College. His final assignment as a Marine officer was program manager of a \$10 billion dollar airplane acquisition program. He retired with the rank of colonel and ran the North American office of a British-owned aerospace company before opening his own consulting business. He describes a consultant as someone too lazy for a full time job.

Colonel and Mrs. Orr now reside in Lago Vista, Texas. Jim is an active member of the local Lions Club and Hope Presbyterian Church in Austin. He is an elder in the church and continues to sing in the choir. He leads annual trips to Mexico, where he works with a church group to build and refurbish classrooms and clinics. He recently completed four years as a Lago Vista City Council member. He and Elizabeth spend as much time as possible doting on their four children and eleven grandchildren. Son Bob, another Rice graduate, is a vice president of Pfizer, the pharmaceutical giant in New York. Barry runs the sports department of a TV station in Phoenix and Mike is a Marine lieutenant colonel commanding a fighter squadron aboard USS Enterprise, now in the Mid-East. Daughter Karen, a lawyer by education, lives with her family about an hour away near Dripping Springs, Texas.