

Chief Master Sergeant James F. Badgrow



Jim Badgrow was born, November 25 1927. He grew up in a small farming community near Atlanta, Michigan. After graduation from Atlanta High School, he enlisted in the United States Army and served from 1946 to 1948, spending a year in Korea with the 7th Infantry Division. After separation from the Army, he came home and learned to fly, receiving his Private Pilot license in a Taylorcraft BC-12D. In December 1948, he came to Alameda, California, to attend an Aircraft and Engine Mechanics school at Oakland airport on the GI Bill. Upon completion, he passed the FAA examinations and received his license as an Airframe and Powerplant mechanic.

In 1949, he joined the California Air National Guard's 61st Fighter Wing. It was later redesignated the 144th Fighter Wing and moved from Oakland to Hayward. He became a full time Air Technician ** at Hayward Air National Guard Base in 1952, working as an aircraft mechanic, maintaining the unit's F-51, T-6, and C-47 aircraft. He flew as a Flight Mechanic on the unit's C-47 and the State Headquarters' C-47, "The Grizzly". When the 144th moved to Fresno in 1954, he elected to remain at Hayward with the newly formed 129th Air Resupply Squadron. He served as both aircraft mechanic and flight mechanic on the unit's C-46 aircraft, transitioning to the HU-16 Albatross and next to the C119 Flying Boxcar. In 1972, the now Master Sergeant Badgrow, participated in a mission ferrying C-119s from the United States across the Pacific Ocean to Viet Nam. In 1974, he deployed across the Atlantic Ocean with part of the Squadron for a NATO exercise in Italy. While at Hayward, he was active in the base Flying Club, flying the Aeronca Chief and Cessna 120/170/175/182 aircraft.

In 1975, the unit became the 129th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron. With that came a change of mission from Special Operations to Air Force Rescue, flying the Lockheed HC-130 Rescue Hercules. After completing his Flight Engineer training on the C-130 at Little Rock AFB and HC-130 at Hill AFB, he served as both Flight Instructor and Flight Examiner. Prior to the unit's 1980 move to Moffett Field, he was assigned to the Squadron's Standardization/Evaluation section, serving as its NCOIC, and was then promoted to Senior Master Sergeant. After retiring from the Air Technician program, December 30, 1982, he was transferred to aircraft maintenance as Organizational Maintenance Chief, and was promoted to Chief Master Sergeant.

On July 16, 1983, with over thirty years of military service, Chief Badgrow retired from the 129th and the Air National Guard. During his service with the 129th, the Unit received the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award and the Coast Guard Meritorious Unit Commendation. The Air Force Commendation Medal and Humanitarian Service Medal are also significant among the eighteen military decorations worn below his Chief Aircrew Member Wings.

While with the 129th, Jim had acquired his FAA Flight Engineer's license. Not quite ready to retire from flying, in February 1984, he was hired by Southern Air Transport, a Miami, Florida, based cargo airline. He flew as a Flight Engineer on both domestic and international routes. Initially flying on the company's Lockheed L-382, a civilian version of the C-130 Hercules, he then transitioned to the Boeing 707. After flying nearly 6,000 hours in that aircraft, they were phased out and he transitioned to the Douglas DC-8 in 1993. When the DC-8 was retired, he went on to the Boeing 747. Places like Auckland, Bombay, Hong Kong, Frankfurt, Fiji, London, Shanghai, Singapore, and Sydney would become familiar stopovers. While on the Boeing 707, he flew cargo missions supporting the 1990-91 Gulf War, and was awarded the Civilian Desert Shield / Desert Storm Medal by the United States Air Force.



After retiring from the airline in September 1998, Jim did some Research and Development flying for a Burbank company developing Hush Kits for the engines of older jet airliners. November 1, 1999, would find him at the Flight Engineer's panel of a very plush Boeing 707, owned by entertainer John Travolta. His last flight as a Flight Engineer came on December 14, 2000, at the panel of a Douglas DC-8. After most of a lifetime in aviation, he retired with more than 22,000 total flying hours, over 10,000 hours in heavy jet airliners and a first-hand view of much of the world, which he had circumnavigated more than once.

He now enjoys retirement in the southern California beachside city of Oceanside where he maintains an active interest in his community, aviation and computers. A lifetime member of the 129th Alumni and Heritage Association, he served as their webmaster from March 2003 to July 2008. In addition to maintaining [his own web site](#), he is currently the webmaster for the [Old Bold Pilots Association in Oceanside](#).

++"Air Technician" Excepted Federal Civil Service positions which provide full time support to Air National Guard units. Military membership in the unit served is a condition of employment.