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Vietnam War

Ronald Whitt enlisted at 17, saw horrors of Vietnam at age 19

BY TIM HAYES

BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

BRISTOL, Va. – Ronald Whitt gripped the handrail of the UH-1 helicopter – referred to by soldiers as “Hueys” or “Slicks” – as he sat with his legs dangling from the side of the chopper when it lifted off from a base camp known as Normandy-1.

The jungle canopies and rice paddies passed below at rapid speed as the pulse quickened for the 19-year-old native of Buchanan County, Virginia, who was preparing for his first mission with Alpha Company, Fourth Platoon in the Army’s First Infantry Division.

It was Saturday, Jan. 6, 1968 around 8 a.m., a hot, humid and muggy morning as most days tended to be in Vietnam during the dry season. How had Whitt gotten here?

He had enlisted in the Army in 1966 at 17 years old, growing tired of high school and looking for a new adventure.

“I had to talk my parents into signing for me,” Whitt said.

After training at Fort Bragg in North Carolina and Fort Carson in Colorado, he was shipped to South Korea and performed frequent guard duty near the Military Demarcation Line that separated South Korea from North Korea.

“I had heard guys start talking about how

bad the winters were there,” Whitt said. “The opportunity came up that they were asking for volunteers to go to Vietnam. I knew I was going to have to go to Vietnam after leaving Korea anyway, so I signed up and left Korea on Oct. 1, 1967.”

After heading back home to Virginia for a bit, he arrived in Vietnam 11 days before Christmas at the receiving station in Long Binh and was issued his M-16 rifle.

He joined his new unit on the first day of 1968 and had to get quickly acclimated.

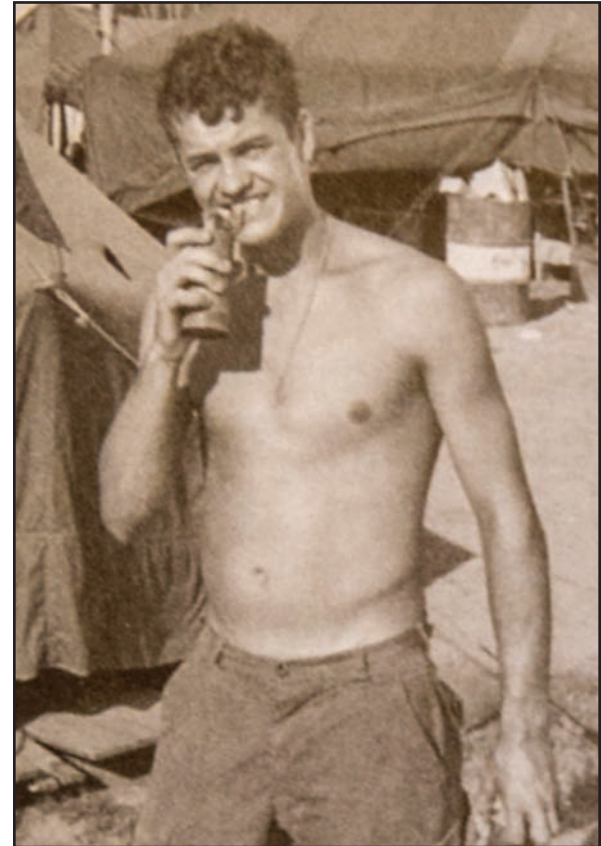
“They put us through jungle war orientation,” Whitt said. “It was a mocked up little [Viet Cong] camp. Then you had to pull a [mock] ambush outside the wire. They tried to prepare you the best they could, but nothing could really prepare you.”

Five days later he and his comrades took that aforementioned helicopter ride to conduct a field sweep four miles southeast of Lai Khe. By day’s end, the Battle of Xom Bung had been waged as Whitt’s division tangled with the enemy for nearly eight hours in intense close-range fighting.

“The VC were building up a battalion [for the upcoming Tet Offensive] and we had walked into it,” Whitt said.

Four of the 14 men in Whitt’s platoon were killed and several others were wounded.

“My first thought after January 6 was ‘I’ll



Ron Whitt was only with the fourth platoon a week before he came to fight at Xom Bung. He remembered thinking when the height of the battle erupted and Wolfe and several others went down that he and his comrades “were all going to die.”

See WHITT Page 4

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Whitt

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never leave here alive.' I never made a calendar like some of the short-timers did," Whitt said. "I made no plans to come home. My mindset was that my mom and dad would get \$10,000 [life insurance money from the Army] and they could use that. I had no girlfriend waiting on me. I knew I had (expletive) up when I joined the Army and had no way of getting out of it."

There would be many more firefights and tense moments for Whitt, who was wounded in the wrist by shrapnel at one point. "In several firefights I thought I was going to die from thirst," Whitt said. "Your mouth would get like cotton and you couldn't make spit. I've drank canteen after canteen of water. I can't say it was fear, but you stayed alert all the time. After a firefight you were so exhausted you just wanted to sleep. You were so mentally high that you were exhausted like you had worked for three days."

Search and destroy missions were the norm.

"The only thing I knew was how to be a grunt and I knew I was



there for one reason and that was to make contact with the enemy," Whitt said. "Every chance you could get. They wanted to keep you in a firefight and I learned that you were very disposable. I remember [U.S. Commander] William Westmoreland saying at one time he would trade one American life for seven [enemies] and win a war. That's how they looked at us."

Whitt's military stint ended Sept. 30, 1969, but the effects of the Vietnam War have stayed with him.

His cousin, Gerald Wayne Cantrell, was killed in action April 4, 1969 in Quang Ngai province.

Combat PTSD led to nightmares and other issues for Whitt, who has took part in therapy sessions since 1983 to cope with his condition.

"There was a stigma that went along with PTSD," Whitt said. "It's a disorder. I had a plumbing company from 1982 until 2003 and very few people knew. I didn't want them to know I had a disorder. During the 1980s and 1990s in movies and television shows, the guys with combat PTSD were portrayed as being freakin' crazy."

Whitt is far from crazy and now 71 and living in Bristol, Virginia, as those days in 1968 when he bravely served his country are still as vivid now as they were 52 years ago. "Vietnam was one hell of a year," Whitt said. ★

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Korean War

Seventy years have passed since Smyth County resident Abe Slemp fought in Korean War

BY GLENNA CRABTREE-BULLINS

SMYTH COUNTY NEWS & MESSENGER

Smyth County resident Abe Slemp was only five weeks into teaching agriculture at Marion High School in 1950 when his country called on him and he responded.

Slemp, 91, graduated from high school in 1946 and went to Virginia Tech, where it was mandatory that he enroll in the Corps of Cadets for two years. At the end of those two years, he had a choice -- stay in the corps or get out. His parents had two children in college at the time, so he opted to stay since that would help him financially as he finished college.

In 1950, Slemp graduated from Virginia Tech and from the Corps of Cadets as a lieutenant. He started looking for a job. Leonard Mauck, Smyth County superintendent of schools, hired him to teach agriculture at Marion High School starting July 1.

"Polio was surging in this area, so they delayed the opening of school until the fall. I taught school for five weeks before I got my notice to report to the Army. Mr. Mauck offered to get me deferred for the school year. It was a pretty big decision to make, but I chose to go into military service at the end of October or Nov. 1," Slemp said.

He was ordered to report to Breckinridge, Kentucky, where he spent his first days of military life trying to get Camp Breckinridge back into operation. He was assigned to the 101st Airborne Unit, U.S. Army Air Force, as an infantryman. In the spring of 1951, he went to Fort Benning, Georgia, for 16 weeks of associate officer's basic training. From Fort Benning, he returned home for two weeks before he began his



Seventy years have passed since Smyth County resident Abe Slemp fought in the Korean War.

journey to Korea.

"I came home for two weeks with orders to go on the pipeline, to Seattle for two weeks before transport to Japan. My only duty there was to check the bulletin board each day to see if my name was on it. I shipped out on the Gen. Hugh J. Gaffey, and was on the water for 16 days from Seattle to Japan. When I got to Japan, I went to chemical warfare school and then wound up on another boat going to Korea," Slemp recalled.

He was assigned to the 19th Regiment, 24th Division.

"Most of the major battles had already been completed. This was just before (Douglas) MacArthur was planning to make his march to put an end to it. I only saw a week of conflict before I was wounded, on Sunday, Oct. 11. We were kindly probing for what was there, looking for the enemy and maybe draw a little bit of fire. On this particular Sunday, as we were going up the hill, we drew quite a bit of fire. We got in a ravine for shelter. From mid-morning until dark, we were pretty much down," Slemp said.

When his squad finally made it back to company headquarters, all was not well.

"The captain said, 'Abe, you got a lot of blood on your leg.' I had been wounded in my thigh.

See **SEMP** Page 8

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Slemp

From Page 6

I went on for some time that day not realizing I was shot. It probably saved my life. After that, a lot of my buddies did lose their life,” Slemp said.

He was transferred to a regimental hospital in Japan to recover. While there, during peace talks, a hydrogen balloon exploded and burned a squad of men. Several of the injured ended up at the hospital with Slemp. For a few days, he helped look after those men.

“I had no real medical training. I just did what I had to do. I had to try. I helped feed the burned men and comforted them,” Slemp said.

Since he didn’t have enough earned points to go back to the United States, Slemp stayed at the Japanese hospital until Thanksgiving, when he received orders to go back to his unit in Korea. Slemp explained that points were awarded based on time served.

In Korea, he was assigned as a liaison officer. His duties, he explained, were to take notes at the generals’ meetings and come back and report on that meeting. Meetings were usually held first thing in the morning.

“I had a Jeep and a driver assigned to me. Once I got that over with about 11 o’clock, I didn’t have a lot to do that day,” he said.

Born on April 4, 1929, in Sugar Grove, to Vernon and Margaret Slemp, he was raised on a farm along with his older brother, Vernon Jr., his twin sister, Barbara, and his younger sister, Peggy. That background on the farm served Slemp well.

“One of the officers, a captain, went pheasant hunting. He came back with several pheasants. Now being a farm boy, I knew how to pick a chicken, so we cleaned and cooked those birds and had a feast,” Slemp said.

Since the 24th Division was relieved, Slemp was assigned to the 40th Division, made up of members of the California National Guard.

“This was a heavy weapons company. I wound up with a BAR (Browning automatic rifle) platoon. We were trying to learn. We did some maneuvers and things so we would know what to do if (the) need came up. I finally got enough points to come home. The only people glad to see me was my mother and daddy. I got no kind of

welcome home at all,” he said.

He stayed with his aunt and uncle in Bethesda, Maryland, while undergoing medical clearance at Walter Reed Hospital, before returning to Smyth County. He served for two years, attained the rank of 2nd lieutenant and earned several medals, including a Purple Heart.

“The Korean War is the forgotten war. It was never meant to be a war, but for those of us that got caught up in it, it wasn’t exactly a conflict. It was a political war and we are still having them,” Slemp said.

Upon his return to Smyth County, Slemp was offered an opportunity to teach at Rich Valley High School.

“I didn’t have any real responsibilities at that time. Mother and daddy were getting older and needed someone to help them out on the farm,” Slemp said.

So he turned down the teaching job and stayed on the farm. He had saved most of his money while in Korea, so he started a dairy farm with his father.

“On Dec. 8, I went to Wythe County and came home with nine cows and three or four heifers. We milked those cows and set the milk out in gallon cans along the road. In the spring, we built a barn, and on July 1st, we sold our first Grade A milk. I worked hard, but farming was good to me. I was doing what I enjoyed. I didn’t mind getting up and going to the barn at 5 a.m. I was financially able to educate all three of my children,” he said.

Slemp was looking forward to retirement as 1992 drew to a close. The early ‘90s were “tough years in my life. I lost my dad at the end of 1991. He was good to me. I lost my wife, Phyllis, six months later. I lost my mother before a year-and-a-half was out,” he said.

Things began looking up, however, when Slemp reconnected with a girl he dated during his time at Virginia Tech when she was in high school. Married in 1993, he and Marivene have celebrated 27 wedding anniversaries. In 1994, Slemp retired at the age of 65 and turned the operation of the farm over to his son, Dan. He and his first wife, Phyllis, had three children, Dan, Terri Ellen and Beth. He has seven grandchildren, several great-grandchildren, two step-daughters, four step-grandchildren and step-great-grandchildren, and one step-great-great



Ninety-one-year-old Abe Slemp stays busy gardening and taking care of his property in Seven Mile Ford. He also enjoys reminiscing about the many things he has experienced in his life, including a two-year stint in the Army during the Korean War.

grandchild.

In 1996, he and Marivene remodeled and moved into her mother’s home, located next door to the farm house she grew up in in Seven Mile Ford. They own a 48-acre farm that is part of the Fox farm, which has been in Marivene’s family since 1804.

Slemp, now 91 years old, enjoys mowing and trimming his yard and gardening.

“This year, gardening was a real challenge because it was so wet. I stayed behind all summer – weeds, weeds, weeds. It takes me three different days to do all the mowing. I mow about four to five acres,” Slemp said.

He is a member of Francis Marion VFW Post 4667 in Marion and serves on the burial detail. He has participated in more than 100 funerals. He is also a member of Ebenezer Lutheran Church and the Friends of Hungry Mother. He and Marivene enjoy traveling.

As Slemp looks back 70 years to the Korean War and his time in the military, he said he is thankful for the experience He knows he has lived a blessed life and is happy to have served his country those many years ago. ★

Afghanistan

Danielle Rock hosts virtual female veteran support group

BY STEPHANIE PORTER-NICHOLS
SMYTH COUNTY NEWS & MESSENGER

BLACKSBURG, Va. -- When Danielle Rock returned home from a tour in Bagram, Afghanistan, the U.S. Army Reserves veteran didn't know what career path she wanted to follow. After six years of military service, she was sure, however, of one fact: She wanted to work with fellow veterans.

"They are my brothers and sisters," Rock said, "and I have a desire to help them."

She enrolled in Radford University, pursuing a Health Education and Health Promotion degree. Those studies led to an internship at the Salem VA Medical Center. A friend shared a help-wanted ad for a veteran peer support specialist with the Virginia Department of Veterans Services.

"They are my brothers and sisters," Rock said, "and I have a desire to help them."

"She said the job description sounded like it was the perfect fit for me. I applied, interviewed, and here I am today doing something I love to do. It is an honor to be able to work with the veteran population."

One of Rock's current focuses is assisting other female veterans.

Last year, a VDVS resource specialist introduced the idea of launching a female veteran peer group in Covington. "I really liked the idea of an 'in person' female veteran group. I have had female veterans in the past ask about forming such a group," Rock said.

Then, along came COVID-19, putting a stop to all in-person group meetings.

When the decision was made to transition to virtual gatherings, Rock wanted "to bring that



idea back to life. I knew if we were doing groups virtually, we could reach so many more female veterans."

The group launched shortly afterward. Initially, the support group started within VDVS's Virginia Veteran and Family Support program, which offers peer support for veterans. Peer Support Specialists work one on one with veterans through peer support groups across the commonwealth.

Staffers reached out to female veterans working within VVFS. Then, the group was opened to the general public.

Now, the agency is "working with community partners around the state to spread the word to female veterans who might be interested in joining the group."

Joining the group is simple. A veteran is connected with Rock and provides proof of military service.

The veteran will then receive invitations via

Google Meets, which can be accessed through a computer, tablet, or phone with the Google Meets app.

In each group, Rock explained, a facilitator and co-facilitator will be present. Rock serves as the main facilitator. She's based in Blacksburg. Co-facilitators are VPS Dawn Hawkins in Richmond, and RS Ahime Harris in Manassas. All three are VVFS employees and are women veterans.

"This group gives women the chance to talk about their unique experiences while serving in the military," Rock said. "It does this while giving them a comfortable and safe environment in which to talk. They have the opportunity to meet with other female veterans with similar stories, struggles, and breakthroughs."

She emphasized, "The goal is to let these female veterans know they are not alone and there is always hope." ★



The female virtual peer support group meets the first and third Monday from 2-4 p.m. Female veterans interested in joining the confidential forum may contact Danielle Rock at 804-839-0480 or Danielle.rock@dvs.virginia.gov.

The VDVS offers a number of special programs and resources for female veterans. Individuals can learn more about them by visiting the VDVS website, clicking on "Veterans Education Transition & Employment" tab and then scrolling down the page to the tab "Virginia Women Veterans:" www.dvs.virginia.gov/education-employment/virginia-women-veterans. Rock also noted that the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has many programs for female veterans. She advises calling the closest VA Medical Center to learn more about what it provides.

The Veteran Crisis Line is 1-800-273-8255

Vietnam War

Air Force helped change man's life for the good

BY LEIF GREISS

BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

BRISTOL, Tenn. -- Joining the U.S. Air Force changed Tom Swadley.

He said when he graduated high school in 1967, he was overweight and had few if any prospects for higher education due to his poor grades.

"I was pretty much lacking in self-confidence," Swadley said.

But after he enlisted with the Air Force, he lost 70 pounds in seven weeks and was given positions of authority, where he was able to live up to other people's expectations of him.

Swadley, 71, served in the Air Force from 1969 to 1973, eventually reaching the rank of staff sergeant. Swadley was stationed as a medic at Royal Air Force Bentwaters's 81st Tactical Air Command Fighter Wing hospital in county Suffolk of the United Kingdom.

Swadley now lives in Bristol, Tennessee but grew up in Johnson City and was there in 1969 when the Vietnam War raged. With the draft in place Swadley said he knew he was going to have to serve at some point.

"Right after the first of the year my draft number was coming up in the army to be drafted and I really didn't want that to happen to be honest, given that I probably would have gone



Tom Swadley

straight to Vietnam," he said.

Swadley had been talking to an Air Force recruiter and enlisted Jan. 14, 1969. He believed that branch of the U.S. military offered him the best opportunity.

During the first year of his deployment he worked in a medical ward in the back of the hospital doing everything from mopping the floor

to taking care of patients. Swadley said he got promoted fairly quickly and then spent two and a half years working in the hospital's emergency room and eventually worked his way up to shift supervisor.

He said his time in the emergency room was memorable. One especially memorable moment involved a young soldier who suffered horrific injuries from a motorcycle accident. Swadley said it was so bad the man almost died three times while they were treating him at the hospital.

While they were taking him by helicopter to a larger hospital, the man started to wake up though and panic, so Swadley tried to calm him down by talking to him.

See **SWADLEY** Page 12

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Swadley

From Page 10

“I said ‘where are you from?’ And he said, ‘you wouldn’t know where it is. It’s a little small town in Tennessee.’ I said ‘well go ahead and try me.’ And he said Kingsport. And I said ‘well, you’re in luck today buddy, I’m from Johnson City’.”

Swadley said he had plenty of experiences off base too. While in the United Kingdom he said he tried to soak up whatever sights, sounds and experiences he could from England, Wales and Scotland. He went to Shakespeare Theatre in Stratford, visited castles and Stonehenge and even took several trips to mainland Europe.

Swadley, a lifelong musician himself, also got to see legendary acts like his idol Eric Clapton, Led Zeppelin, the Rolling Stones, Steppenwolf and Jefferson Airplane in their prime as well as blues guitarist and singer Freddie King a few years before his death.

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Korean War

Retired Bristol businessman served in Korean War

BY ROBERT SORRELL

SPECIAL TO THE BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

BRISTOL, Tenn.—Retired Bristol insurance businessman William Harrison Gilley served in the Korean War, working in a U.S. Air Force office and dodging mortar shells.

Gilley, 88, enlisted in the Air Force in March 1951. He was 19 years old at the time and lived in Kingsport.

“We were very patriotic,” said Gilley, who was born and raised in Fries, Virginia. “The whole world was patriotic.”

He went to the recruiting office with a friend and was sent to Knoxville. Gilley said he chose the Air Force because it has “the best caliber of men.”

Gilley served basic training for two months in San Antonio, Texas, but then went on to school at Central Missouri State College.

After college, Gilley said he took the Air Force aptitude test, which shows what a person could do best in the service. He learned he should work in the personnel department. Gilley learned how to type and the basic procedures of the personnel office.

He was then sent to Tokyo, Japan, to work in the same building where General Douglas MacArthur was headquartered. But he never saw the famous general.

Gilley lived and worked in Tokyo for most of his time in the service. He received secret clearance to monitor his unit, which was stationed on the Korean peninsula. He worked on the unit’s daily report, which featured information about the unit’s personnel. He was also stationed at Johnson Air Force Base near Tokyo and often drove a jeep to transport various military officials.

During his time, Gilley spent 10 days at a base in Korea.

“He would shoot the mess hall,” said Gilley, referring to North Korean forces.

Known as “bed-check Charlie,” communist



William Harrison Gilley



aircraft harassed American troops by dropping mortar rounds. Gilley said he often heard the raids at night, and once had to hide under a table in the mess hall when “bed-check Charlie” attacked.

At another Korean base, Gilley recalled running for cover when communist troops tried to raid the base.

“I was sleeping at night, at 1 or 2 in the morning, when I heard aviation,” Gilley said. “They were trying to alert the base. I had to grab my rifle and ran to the foxhole.”

Gilley isn’t aware of any casualties during the raids, but said they were mainly conducted to harass or scare the American troops.

Gilley was discharged from the Air Force in March 1955. He returned to work for J. Fred Johnson, a notable Tri-Cities business leader. He also obtained a general degree from East Tennessee State University in 1958.

Eventually, Gilley established Gilley, McCready and Steed, an insurance agency in Bristol. He’s now retired and lives with his wife, Mary Jo, in Bristol. They have two daughters, four grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

In 2018, Gilley received a call from a Knoxville resident telling him that his military dog tags had been found in Blountville. Resident Jack Thompson said he and his wife purchased property on Yoakley Gottland Road on the shores of Patrick Henry Lake and were in the process of tearing down a small barn when they found the dog tags.

Through Facebook, the family found Gilley and reunited him with the dog tags, which he said he likely lost decades prior while skiing on the lake and visiting nearby Warriors Path State Park.

Gilley now keeps the dog tags, wartime photographs and military documents at home to remember his time in the service.

“I enjoyed my time in the military,” he said while sitting at his dining room table a long way from the Korean peninsula. ★

Korean War

Sage served as soldier and sailor during war

BY MARK SAGE

SMYTH COUNTY NEWS & MESSENGER

Stanley Sage was 16. Freezing and scared. With temperatures hitting nearly 40 below zero, Sage said he wasn't worried so much about getting shot.

"I was more worried about freezing to death." He'd joined the Army, lying about his age, just as the United States was easing into the Korean War 70 years ago this year.

Immediately after basic training, the teenage soldier spent a bit of time in Japan and then found himself storming into Inchon. Before long, he and the rest of the boys in the 7th Division, 32nd Infantry, 4th Platoon, were well into the northern part of Korea, near the Chinese border.

"I'd do it again if I could," he said. "Life is short; you might as well make the best of it."

It was up there where they hit the cold weather and hot battles.

The Chosin Reservoir Campaign – known colloquially as the "Frozen Chosin" – marked the entrance of the People's Republic of China

into the conflict. In addition to pitched fighting that resulted in an estimated combined nearly 90,000 casualties, the brutal cold took a heavy toll. Official sources say medical supplies froze, making blood and plasma useless on the battlefield. Batteries turned to bricks and the oil in guns gelled, causing misfires and jams. Soldiers outfitted without cold weather gear suffered frostbite as their feet first sweated then froze.

Sage didn't know it at the time, but his mother had been working to bring the young man home to Virginia. The late Vrina Dockery Sage sent word to the Army that her son had lied about his age and joined the service without parental permission. The military wheels began churning, slowly.

By the time it caught up with Sage, he was 17 and had already made corporal, something he's still proud of – along with the Combat Infantrymen's Badge he earned.

He received an honorable minority discharge. Though he didn't ask his mother to get him out, he didn't need to be told twice to get out.

"I was on the front line fighting," he said, "stepping over dead people."

One day in 1951, Sage said an officer told him that when the unit pulled back, he was out. The catch was he had to find his own way

Contributed photos



Stanley Sage, then 17, in his picture for the Army.



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to Our Veterans*





back to Busan, on the southern tip of Korea. He hitchhiked the whole way.

“I didn’t care what way we were going as long as I wasn’t going forward,” Sage said.

Back home, Sage hung around Smyth County for three or four months, then the itch to go hit again. This time he was 18.

And this time, he joined the Navy.

He went straight from home to Florida, where he boarded the USS DeLong, the same ship his brother Jesse Sage served on. The two spent most of their tour shuttling between Key West and Cuba.

The weather, Sage said, was definitely better than in Korea.

It was while serving on the DeLong that Sage started what would become his career. The ship’s barber, he said, had been discharged and his brother lied to a supply officer, saying he knew how to cut hair. He didn’t even know how to turn

“*I didn’t care what way we were going as long as I wasn’t going forward,”*

on a pair of clippers. But he figured it out and became the ship’s new barber. His brother was his first ever customer late one night in the head.

In June 1954, Sage was discharged from the Navy. He decided to learn how to cut hair properly and headed off to barber college in Richmond. He thought, briefly, of re-enlisting in the Army and making a career of soldiering, but freshly married with a child on the way, he “turned my clippers back on” and got on with the business of a building a life.

It’s been a good life, he said, but the time in northern Korea left its mark. Like many veterans of the campaign, Sage, now 87, has suffered health problems tied to his time in, including burning leg cramps, loss of feeling in his feet and fingernail deformity, all related to what experts call cold injury. Still, he said he wouldn’t change a thing.

“I’d do it again if I could,” he said. “Life is short; you might as well make the best of it.”

From 1955 to 1960, Sage cut hair at a barbershop on Iron Street in downtown Marion.



Stanley Sage, left, and his brother Jesse in their Navy days. The two served on the same ship, the USS DeLong, running from Florida to Cuba.

The family moved to Florida and he continued working there – in the same barbershop for 49 years.

He noted that he’s just recently sold it.

Sage and his wife of 65 years, Helen Joines Sage, split their time nowadays between a home in central Florida and another one in Chilhowie. ★

Korean War

Military and police veteran Jack Crosswell tells stories from his residence in Cripple Creek

BY JACK CROSSWELL

CRIPPLE CREEK, Va. -- My destroyer had completed its tour offshore, occasionally firing at enemy forces on shore. Me? I was a white hat sailor who caught spent casings being kicked out of a 5-inch gun on the aft of our destroyer, the USS Picking.

Instead of coming straight home across the wide Pacific, they sent us home via the Suez Canal. The Prince of Monaco invited us to drop anchor at Monte Carlo.

Our captain told us to behave like gentlemen since we were invited guests. He said we'd have "open house" the next day and welcome visitors.

In those days, I was sometimes involved in barroom brawls so I decided for once to try and act like a gentleman. So I went to a high-class hotel bar and ordered a glass of wine.

The prices were high and one glass was all I could afford. As I sipped the wine, a man with a violin was making his rounds, playing at each table. When he stopped at mine, I asked



See **CROSSWELL** Page 21

File photo by Jeffrey Simmons/Wytheville Enterprise



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Harry Shazier
 E6
 U.S. Marine Corps
 Vietnam



• IN HONOR •
Franklin Shazier
 E6
 U.S. Army
 Vietnam
 1966-1988



• IN MEMORY •
Wilton L. Sutphin
 US Army
 Private 1st Class
 1954 - 1956



• IN HONOR •
Leonard Caley DeHart
 US Army
 Spec 3rd Class Tank Division
 Korea
 1955-1957



• IN MEMORY •
John W. Weddle
 TEC 5 US Army
 Service Dates:
 1941 - 1945



• IN MEMORY •
Charles (Butch) Italiano, Jr.
 Sergeant
 United States Army
 Vietnam
 1966-1970



• IN MEMORY •
Leslie Alvin Dalton
 United States Army
 Sgt.
 Korean Conflict
 1950-1952



• IN MEMORY •
Alfred J. Sowers
 Sergeant
 United States Army
 Korean Conflict
 1950 - 1953



• IN MEMORY •
Marvin Nolen
 US Navy
 Seaman 1st Class
 WWII
 1945-1945



• IN MEMORY •
James W. Harris
 US Army
 Sgt
 1953-1955



• IN MEMORY •
Robert "Bob" Schmitt
 Seaman 2nd Class
 United States Navy
 WWII
 June 1944 - June 1946



• IN MEMORY •
Peter Simon Lewis Jr. , DDS
 US Army 2nd Lieutenant
 Commanded a machine gun platoon
 in Germany during World War I.
 Lt. Lewis was the uncle of Copper Hill
 resident Peter Lewis

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• IN MEMORY •

Giles Carlton Rose

MSgt United States Air Force
Special Operations
Vietnam War
2 Tours Retired after
26 ½ Years of Service
1953-1979



• IN HONOR •

Kourtne Ann Marie Melendez

SSgt United States Air Force
Global War on Terrorism
Iraq & Afghanistan Wars
July 2009 - July 2014



• IN HONOR •

Charles E. Sage

1st Sergeant
U.S. Navy/U.S. Army
1954-1979
2 tours in Korea
2 tours in Vietnam



• IN MEMORY •

Billy R. Ward

United States Air Force
T Sgt.
Vietnam
1956-1978



• IN MEMORY •

Curtis J. Sexton, Sr.

Pvt-E3 United States Army
Vietnam
1964 - 1966



• IN HONOR •

Robert Clifton Warden

Tech Sgt
United States Air Force
1958-1978



• IN HONOR •

William F. Dean

PFC
U.S. Army
World War II
1944-1946



• IN HONOR •

Robert "Clay" Hankla

United States Air Force
Airman First Class
1985-1989



• IN MEMORY •

Charles Robert Hankla Jr.

United States Army
Private 1st Class
World War II
1943-1944



• IN HONOR •

Ben Hutton

Staff Sergeant
U.S. Army Reserves
760th Engineer
Operation Iraqi Freedom
2003-2004



• IN MEMORY •

Ralph E. Robertson

CPL
U.S. Army
Korean War
1950-1952



• IN HONOR •

Gary L. Donaldson

SP/5
United States Army
Vietnam
1966-1969



• IN MEMORY •

Gregory V. Pennington

SSG
U.S. Army
Operation Iraqi Freedom
1999-2004



• IN MEMORY •

Glenn Oscar Harrison Sr.

PFC
U.S. Army
Panama
1947-1950



• IN HONOR •

Ronnie C. Call

Sergeant
United States Army
Vietnam
1969-1972



• IN MEMORY •
Douglas L. Owens
 United States Air Force
 Airman 3rd Class
 1956-1962



• IN HONOR •
James L. Hall
 United States Army, PFC
 Korean
 1952-1954



• IN MEMORY •
Raymond R. Greb
 United States Air Force,
 Smsgt
 Korean War
 1947-1970



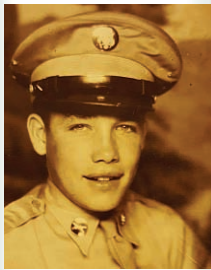
• IN HONOR •
Thomas Williams
 United States Marines, LCPL
 1978-1984



• IN HONOR •
Edward L. McGuire
 United States Air Force, Sgt
 1966-1970



• IN MEMORY •
Charles Sullins
 SSG, United States Army
 1954-1963



• IN HONOR •
Shirley J. Hodge
 United States Army, Cpl
 Korean
 Aug 2 1948 - May 12 1952



• IN HONOR •
Gabriel L. Watkins
 United States Marines,
 Staff Sgt
 IRAQ
 Sept 2006 - Present



• IN HONOR •
Janice Sullins Brown
 SGT, United States Army
 1980-1992



• IN HONOR •
James (Jim) A. Smith
 United States Air Force
 2nd Class
 1956-1959



• IN MEMORY •
Hiram H. Taylor
 United States Navy, S 1/c
 WWII
 1943-1946



• IN MEMORY •
Jackie F. Hodge
 United States Air Force,
 TSGT
 1956-1977



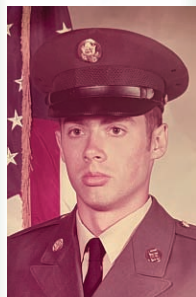
• IN MEMORY •
Vernon Collins
 United States Army
 WWII POW
 1939-1945



• IN MEMORY •
Henry C. (H.C.) Hart
 United States Army, SSG
 Vietnam
 1954 - 1978



• IN HONOR •
Robert F. Vaughn
 United States Marines, Sgt
 Vietnam - Purple Heart
 Recipient
 1966 - 1968



• IN HONOR •
Jimmy Ball
 United States Army, SP4
 Vietnam
 1972-1974



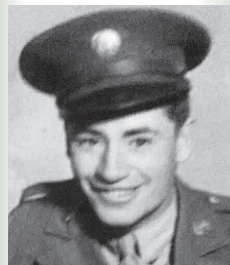
• IN HONOR •
Ray Shortridge
 United States Army, Cpl
 Korean
 1953 - 1955



• IN MEMORY •
Herbert W. Boyd
 United States Army, Cpl
 Korean
 1949 - 1951



• IN MEMORY •
Fred Malone, Jr
 United States Army, Sp 4
 Vietnam War
 1970 - 1973



• IN MEMORY •
Roy Lee Martin, Sr
 United States Army
 WWII



• IN HONOR •
Campbell Louthen
 United States Air Force,
 Staff Sgt
 Korean
 1950 - 1954



• IN HONOR •
Jarrett Bostic
 United States Air Force
 2020 - Present



• IN HONOR •
Brandon Weible
 United States Marine Corps,
 PFC
 2020 - Present



• IN HONOR •
Paul F. Crowe
 United States Air Force,
 MSGT
 WWII, Korean, Vietnam
 1944 - 1967



• IN HONOR •
Casey Jones
 United States Marine Corps,
 Cpl
 2017 - Present



• IN HONOR •
Alex Troncale
 United States Marine Corps,
 LCpl
 2014-2018



• IN MEMORY •
Douglas B. Leonard
 United States Army, CSM
 WWII, Korean, Vietnam
 1943 - 1968



Crosswell

From Page 16

to borrow his violin and played "Turkey in the Straw" and it brought a standing ovation. Among those applauding was a long table of dignitaries, including Geoffrey Hobday, the conductor of the Monte Carlo Symphony Orchestra. I invited them all to visit the ship as we were having open house. I drank so much of their wine I hardly remembered getting back aboard the Picking.

I was chipping paint the next morning when an officer yelled at me, "Crosswell, get to the quarterdeck!" He told me get out of the dungarees and wear dress blues. I'd forgotten about the night before and wondered what I had done.

Most of the people, including Mr. Hobday, were visiting.

After a session with our captain in his stateroom, all of us shared coffee and tea. When they had gone, the captain chewed me out for not notifying him of their visit.

"A couple of them should have been piped aboard," he said.

In later years, I heard that Geoffrey Hobday, an Englishman, had become conductor of the West Virginia Symphony Orchestra, but I never got a chance to see him again.

(As a child, my dear mother forced me to take violin lessons; my attention span and talents were short. ★

Editor's note: *The preceding is a firsthand account. Wythe County resident Jack Crosswell enlisted in the Naval Reserves in 1946 and was called to active duty in 1950. He was a seaman aboard two destroyers seeing action along the Korean coast. He also served briefly on a task force dispatched to guard Taiwan from a Chinese invasion. He was discharged in 1953 and used his GI Bill to attend Wake Forest, where he got a degree in English literature. He is a retired Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms agent and former police chief. Also, he worked as a deputy sheriff and ABC officer. The following is a firsthand account of one of his wartime experiences.*



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LENDER

Afghanistan

Army veteran's communications career included stints in White House, Iraq and Afghanistan

BY SARAH WADE
BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

On July 4, 2010, Todd McKinley was discussing U.S. military strategies with an Iraqi police supervisor inside the Provincial Government Center in Ramadi, Al-Anbar Province, in western Iraq.

Several minutes later he was staring at a heap of mangled body parts outside the building, trying to identify the suicide bomber whose blast had just killed several Iraqi citizens and blown doors off their hinges.

McKinley said he and several other U.S. Army officers pulled up security camera footage of the explosion site just before the blast. They noticed something concerning.

"We watched several of the Iraqi police officers [near that spot] walk away from their posts a few minutes beforehand," McKinley said during an Oct. 27 interview. "So they were in on it."

The group reported it to the Iraqi police commander overseeing the officers, McKinley said.

"The commander said they would handle it," he said. "Whatever that meant, I don't know."

McKinley served an active tour in Iraq from 2009 to 2010 and an additional in Afghanistan in 2012. He said that most of the violence he encountered on duty was indirect. It posed real danger, he said, but it was peripheral to his real work: communication.

Throughout his 20 years of military service, the 41-year-old veteran excelled in positions that focused on sharing information and creating good systems for sharing it. He spent 6 ½ years doing that work for the White House, under two administrations, in addition to doing it on his tours.

McKinley was born and grew up in Kingsport. He said he joined the U.S. Army in 1996, right after graduating from Sullivan North High



School.

"It was one of those things that I had always wanted to do," he said. "It's a great opportunity to be able to see things, be able to serve the country, and also, the educational opportunities were a big draw."

McKinley completed basic and advanced training and a NATO-focused mission in Germany, he said. He then returned to the U.S. for more training, including Special Forces Assessment and Selection, which he passed, and training with the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

In December 2004, McKinley said, he was recruited to join the White House as a vice

presidential communications response officer, or VPCRO. ("They've since dropped the 'c' out of there," he said.)

One of his main jobs as a VPCRO was to carry a special briefcase called the "communications football," McKinley said. It wasn't the "nuclear football," the briefcase containing the materials the President can use to authorize a nuclear attack away from a command center. But McKinley said his briefcase served a similar purpose—to enable emergency provisions that might be needed during emergencies—and said he worked closely with the staffer carrying the nuclear football.

McKinley's other duties included being ready

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McKinley

From Page 22

to “tap into all the communications networks” across the country—every TV channel and radio station—in the event that the president or vice president needed to make an urgent address to the nation, he said.

He said he also accompanied Vice President Cheney and, eventually, Vice President Biden wherever they traveled by helicopter or motorcade, and said he enjoyed being around both.

“You [get] to see both sides of these guys, and just how funny and how nice they can be,” he said.

McKinley’s Iraq tour began in mid-2009 and ran through the summer of 2010. At that time, he said, the U.S. military was scaling back its active role in the Iraq War that had begun with its 2003 invasion of the country. His job was to train Iraqi army and police commanders how to use U.S. military and organizational leadership tactics.

McKinley said the cultural differences between him and his Iraqi counterparts posed all sorts of teaching challenges. But he said he enjoyed the work and the camaraderie he built with different people there.

“If you can make a few people a little bit better and more proficient in what their job is, maybe it’ll help them stay alive in the long run, in the event that they have to face a foe in the future,” he said.

In 2012, McKinley said he traveled to



“It was one of those things that I had always wanted to do,” he said. “It’s a great opportunity to be able to see things, be able to serve the country, and also, the educational opportunities were a big draw.”

Afghanistan as a liaison officer. He spent about nine months of active duty near the peaks of the Hindu Kush mountains, over which insurgents would travel from Pakistan to attack U.S. forces, he said.

His job, with the team he said he’d picked from his 82nd Airborne platoon, was to

make sure everybody in his brigade could communicate with everybody else.

“...everybody was...relying on us,” McKinley said. “We were working on some of these far-off outposts to make sure that they had secure and non-secure voice data, internet and all the things they needed to be able to operate.”

He said there were no major communications crises for his team during his deployment. But mortars and rockets did strike his camp every so often, McKinley said.

Once, after a young engineer was killed in a firefight, McKinley said, he and a fellow officer had to go through the man’s belongings. McKinley found a journal containing some of the engineer’s goals. The man wanted to get an education, go back home and provide for his family, McKinley said.

“But one of the first things he said, first things first, was, ‘Survive this deployment,’” McKinley recalled. “And we had to send all this stuff back to his family.... It was very sad.”

But McKinley said there were also peaceful days, when the only clashes he saw happened during soldiers’ video game tournaments. He was grateful his whole team made it home safely, he said.

“Whenever you’re serving, you put that mission first and not yourself first,” said McKinley, who retired from the military in 2016 and has been campaigning for President Trump’s reelection. “Even if it costs you your life, that’s what you’re there to do.” ★

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Afghanistan

For Dewayne Woods military service was a passion

BY JOE TENNIS
BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

ABINGDON, Va. - Dewayne Woods spent 27 years in the U.S. Army, both in active duty and on reserves.

It was a time that made him find friendship with his fellow soldiers, serving in the sands of Desert Storm in 1991 and returning again to the Middle East for tours at Iraq in 2003 and 2005.

In all, Woods spent 14 years in active duty and 13 years in the Army Reserves.

He retired from the Army in July 2015.

Today, at 51, Woods lives on the outskirts of Abingdon, where he graduated Abingdon High School in 1988.

Being in the Army was a career that Woods wanted "all my life," he said.

On duty, he served as a tank crewman with a stint in Germany.

Overseas, his duty in Desert Storm was quick: "It was over about as soon as it started," Woods said.

Yet, when going to war in Iraq, he said, "You didn't know what to expect."

Woods found comfort in "the camaraderie that you have with your other guys in your platoon and your company," he said. "And you realize what it means to come home."

These days, Woods stays busy playing the

"Bristol Pirate" in costume at games of the Bristol Pirates. "I pretty much just go through the stands," he said. "And if the Pirates win, I will run the flag around the bases."

Still, Woods reflects on his many years of military services - especially on Veterans Day.

"I'm continuing on the passion for the country from veterans of earlier wars," Woods said. "I'm continuing what they started ... You have to have a passion for it. You can't look at the military service as a job; it's more of a passion." ★

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Vietnam War

From serving in Vietnam to officiating in the NFL, Leslie Speight reminisces on what he's accomplished

BY TAMICA JEAN-CHARLES
RICHMOND TIMES DISPATCH

It was 3:30 a.m. April 4, 1968. Leslie Speight was sound asleep in his bunker in Vietnam. A fellow soldier was smoking a cigarette, which Speight always suspected had given away their position. Soon, an 81-millimeter mortar would destroy the bunker and leave a hole in Speight's foot. He doesn't remember much else besides hollering into the night until medics arrived.

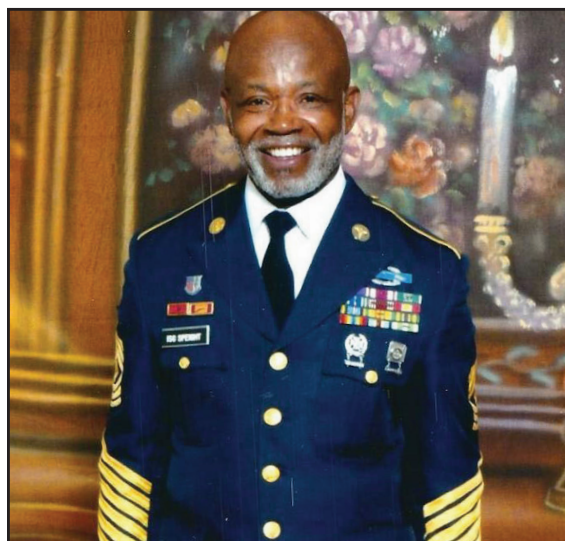
"I was lucky," Speight said. "I could've got blown into pieces as big as a quarter, but I guess it just wasn't my time."

The next day, he found out that civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. had been shot hours after Speight was injured. King hadn't survived. Speight felt thankful to be alive, but April 4 would be seared in his memory for the next five decades as the worst day of his life.

Speight's time in Vietnam was a terrible experience, he says. Twenty-one soldiers in his company died. Two more, including Speight, were wounded.

He eventually left Vietnam and sought further treatment for his foot in Kanazawa, Japan. He'd received treatment at five different hospitals.

Speight had originally enlisted with three high school friends from Wilson, N.C. who also served in Vietnam, but was the only one of the



four to re-enlist. He wanted to stay active; his foot had healed for the most part. Speight remains on pain medication to this day.

Speight would spend the next 17 years stationed at Fort Bragg, N.C., where he served in numerous positions, including working in sports and recreation. While there, he served as a coach and official for the college level basketball and football teams within the Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association and the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference until 1986.

He took a break from CIAA and the MEAC to apply for the National Football League as an official. He, along with 10 other referees, were

chosen out of 520 candidates. The NFL sent him to 29 officiating schools in Europe, traveling to countries like Spain and Germany, to officiate games within the World Football League before the start of the games back home.

Every Saturday morning, he would fly first class out of Richmond to Atlanta, then fly out to one of the cities with a pro football team. The next couple of days would consist of studying the plays of the teams in previous games, the rush of the game and then breaking down the games they refereed before making it back to the airport to teach his class on Monday morning.

"The only thing I didn't like about it was the flying," Speight said with a laugh.

He recalls officiating a game between Washington and Dallas. The crowd erupted in cheers as Cowboys running back Emmitt Smith appeared to score a touchdown. But Speight noticed something: Smith's knee hit the pylon, or the orange markers at the corners of the field, before he caught the ball, meaning he was out of bounds and the touchdown wouldn't count.

"[ESPN] kept showing it again and again and I was thinking to myself, did I make the right call?" Speight said.

Speight now spends his free time working out three times a week and helping out at his church, Tabernacle Baptist Church, as a trustee. ★

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Veterans Day Timeline

Unlike Memorial Day, Veterans Day pays tribute to all American veterans – living or dead – but especially gives thanks to living veterans who served their country during war or peacetime. Here are notable facts associated with the holiday's development.

THE BEGINNING

★ **World War I** – known at the time as “The Great War” – officially ended when the Treaty of Versailles was signed on June 28, 1919, in the Palace of Versailles in France. But fighting had ceased seven months earlier when an armistice,



or temporary cessation of hostilities, between the Allied nations and Germany went into effect on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month. For that reason, Nov. 11, 1918, is generally regarded as the end of “the war to end all wars.”

★ Veterans Day originated as Armistice Day on Nov. 11, 1919, the first anniversary of the end of World War I.

★ In November 1919, President Woodrow Wilson proclaimed the first commemoration of Armistice Day with the following words:

To us in America, the reflections of Armistice Day will be filled with solemn pride in the heroism of those who died in the country's service and with gratitude for the victory, both because of the thing from which it has freed us and because of the opportunity it has given America to show her sympathy with peace and justice in the councils of the nations.

★ The original concept for the celebration was for a day observed with parades and public meetings – and a two-minute suspension of business beginning at 11 a.m.

1920 and 1930s

★ On June 4, 1926, Congress officially recognized the end of World War I – and called for an annual observance – when it passed a resolution with these words:

Whereas the 11th of November 1918, marked the cessation of the most destructive, sanguinary, and far reaching war in human annals and the resumption by the people of the United States of peaceful relations with other nations, which we hope may never again be severed, and ...

Whereas it is fitting that the recurring



anniversary of this date should be commemorated with thanksgiving and prayer and exercises designed to perpetuate peace through good will and mutual understanding between nations; and

Whereas the legislatures of twenty-seven of our States have already declared November 11 to be a legal holiday ...

Therefore be it Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring), that the President of the United States is requested to issue a proclamation calling upon the officials to display the flag of the United States on all



Government buildings on November 11 and inviting the people of the United States to observe the day in schools and churches, or other suitable places, with appropriate ceremonies of friendly relations with all other peoples.

★ On May 13, 1938, Congress approves an act making Nov. 11 an annual federal holiday – a day to be dedicated to the cause of world peace and to be thereafter celebrated and known as Armistice Day.

★ Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, most states had established Nov. 11 as a legal holiday. 1950s

★ In 1954 – after World War II had required the greatest mobilization of soldiers, sailors, Marines and airmen in the nation's history, and after American forces had in Korea – Congress, at the urging of the veterans service organizations, amended the 1938 act by replacing the word “Armistice” with “Veterans.”

★ On June 1, 1954, with the approval of that legislation, Nov. 11 became a day to honor American veterans of all wars.



★ On Oct. 8, 1954, President Dwight D. Eisenhower issued the first Veterans Day proclamation, which said of Nov. 11:

[To] expand the significance of that commemoration [Armistice Day] and in order that a grateful Nation might pay appropriate homage to the veterans of all its wars who have contributed so much to the preservation of this

Nation ... let us solemnly remember the sacrifices of all those who fought so valiantly, on the seas, in the air, and on foreign shores, to preserve our heritage of freedom, and let us reconsecrate ourselves to the task of promoting an enduring peace so that their efforts shall not have been in vain.

1960s and 1970s

★ On June 28, 1968, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Uniform Holiday Bill to ensure three-day weekends for federal employees by celebrating four national holidays (beyond Labor Day) on Mondays: Washington's Birthday, Memorial Day, Veterans Day and Columbus Day. The law took effect in 1971.

★ It was thought that these extended weekends would encourage travel as well as recreational and cultural activities, and would stimulate industrial and commercial production.

★ On Oct. 25, 1971, the first Veterans Day under the new law was observed with much confusion, as many states had not agreed with the new law and continued to celebrate the holidays on their original dates.

★ By 1975, since the change to the fourth Monday in October, most states had either continued to commemorate Nov. 11 or had reverted back to the original date based on popular sentiment.

★ On Sept. 20, 1975, President Gerald R. Ford signed a law that returned the annual observance of Veterans Day to its original historic date of Nov. 11, beginning in 1978.

OF NOTE

★ Veterans Day continues to be observed on Nov. 11, regardless of the day of the week on which it falls.

★ If the Nov. 11 holiday falls on a weekend, the holiday is observed by the federal government on Friday (if the holiday falls on Saturday) or Monday (if the holiday falls on Sunday).



★ Every Veterans Day and Memorial Day, Arlington National Cemetery holds an annual memorial service. The cemetery is home to the graves of more than 400,000 people, most of whom served in the military.

★ In 1921, Congress passed legislation approving the establishment of a Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington National Cemetery, with Nov. 11 chosen as the date of the ceremony.

ELSEWHERE

★ Many nations commemorate the veterans of World War I and World War II on or near November 11th.

★ France observes Armistice Day on Nov. 11. The blue cornflower is a symbol of remembrance.

★ Great Britain observes Remembrance Day on the second Sunday of November with parades, services and two minutes of silence to honor those who lost their lives in war. The red poppy is synonymous with the day.

★ Canada and Australia have Remembrance Day on Nov. 11. Canada's observance is fairly similar to America's; in Australia, the day is more akin to our Memorial Day.

Sources: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, History.com, Defense Department, U.S. Army Center of Military History

War

From Vietnam to the 1964 Olympics, Army veteran Flo Dunn saw it all

BY ABBY CHURCH

RICHMOND TIMES-DISPATCH

1956-era Yale, Virginia, Flo Dunn recalled, women had three options.

They could become a hairdresser, a nurse, or, she said, they could get married.

But Dunn always wanted something else for herself.

Joining the Army had long been a dream of Dunn's. She would've dropped out of school to enlist if she could've.

She remembers bringing home the papers to join the Women's Army Corps. At 18, both parents had to sign before a woman could enlist.

"My mother just said, you know, whatever you do, just do the best that you can be," Dunn said.

"Just do your best."

Her father was more reluctant. It was nursing school or nothing.

“My mother just said, you know, whatever you do, just do the best that you can be,” Dunn said. “Just do your best.”

Dunn obliged and applied and got into the program at the Petersburg General Hospital School of Nursing. But that's as far as she would go.

She told her dad that she was going to sit around the house and enlist when she turned 21.

Six months later, he signed the papers and she would soon ship out to basic training at Fort McClellan, Alabama.

She'd spend 22 years, five months and a day



Flo Dunn

in the Army, traveling across the country and the globe as a military journalist and in public affairs.

Dunn's sister, Jane Williams, remembers the day the car came to pick Dunn up. She, her mother and her father all cried.

The one thing Dunn remembers about Alabama is the heat. The notion of taking orders and getting up early wasn't something she had to get used to though. She grew up on a farm doing that.

Her GT test recommended public affairs and journalism. Dunn decided to go with it - she'd been a sports editor for her high school's yearbook.

From Fort McClellan, Dunn went to Army information school at Fort Slocum in New York.

Next stop was Fort Eustis near Newport News. Dunn was there for five years, and during her assignment, she got sick and was discharged. She eventually enlisted again for another six years.

Dunn said she initially signed on to do three years because it offered an opportunity to go overseas. Her next stop was Japan, where she did a two-year tour and extended for another year. She tried again but only men were allowed to stay longer than three years, she said.

As a journalist in Japan, Dunn remembers interviewing stars like actor Raymond Burr, country singer Jimmie Rodgers and Bob Friend with the Pittsburgh Pirates.

The reason she extended her time in Japan



was to go to the 1964 Olympics in Tokyo. Dunn covered one event as a reporter for "Stars & Stripes," though she doesn't think it ever made it to print: tandem kayaking.

"Who in the heck wants to read about a kayak event when you can read about field and track and all of that?" she said.

In the early 1970s, Dunn found her way to Vietnam. By that point, she'd gone back to Fort McClellan to become an officer.

At the time, the United States' presence there was dwindling. She did civil operations and rural development support with a team of seven on the community development directorate, where they worked on pacification efforts.

She remembers going to one village and the Vietnamese being in awe of her. They'd never seen a woman in the military or someone who was blonde.

Dunn was stationed in downtown Saigon. Williams remembers sending items Dunn couldn't get there - one time, an unopened box of Twinkies.

When Dunn received them, ants had gotten

inside the packaging, including the cellophane.

Dunn went to throw them away, but her roommate stopped her before they made it to the trash can. If you put the Twinkies in the freezer, her roommate said, the ants will die and she

"We need people to carry on this proud tradition," she said. "And I would do it all over again if I had a chance."

could knock them off.

Needless to say, they got their Twinkie fix.

Once back in the states, Dunn spent some time at the Norfolk Naval Base as the director of a recruiting magazine that was sent to high schools.

And after 22 years, five months and a day were up, Dunn retired. It was time for something new.

Her mom was living alone on the family farm and Dunn wanted to be closer to her. She retired

to Virginia Beach then took a civilian job doing public affairs for the US Army Troop Support Agency in 1979.

Retirement allowed her opportunities to travel. Dunn has been to every state, every continent and every province of Canada except Labrador.

She fully retired and moved back to the farm in Yale in 2005.

Looking back on her experience, she said she's encourage everyone to join for at least two years so they can learn teamwork and about the people who make the country great.

Nowadays, Dunn manages the farm and sits on the board of directors for the Friends of the Army Women's Museum Association. She said it's the only museum in the world devoted to women in the military and their achievements.

She's in there too.

Dunn's boots from Vietnam are on display. A shot of her from Vietnam hangs in a panoramic display of women in the wars.

"We need people to carry on this proud tradition," she said. "And I would do it all over again if I had a chance." ★



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