

Bailey served in Army and Navy

BY CAMBRIDGE NEWS/
DEERFIELD INDEPENDENT STAFF

Jerry Bailey's military career began quite by accident. In the fall following his graduation from Cambridge High School, he returned home from work to find his mother, Geneva Bailey, sitting on the sofa waving his draft notice.

He went to the recruiting station and chose the Navy as his "first tour."

In April 1971, Bailey left home with the clothes on his back, a shaving kit, his paperwork and about \$20 in his wallet. He went to San Diego for basic training, followed by Quartermaster "A" School, which teaches sailors how to become navigators on Navy warships.

His first assignment was to the USS Hepburn FF-1055, a frigate. It almost immediately got underway for a six-month Western Pacific "cruise" from San Diego to Hawaii, to Guam, then to the Philippines, and eventually onto the "gun line" off the coast of Vietnam.

During those six months, it visited many ports of call in Japan, the Philippines, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and of course back to the "gun line" to fire missions in support of the U.S. Army and U.S. Marines.

After returning to the States, Bailey was transferred to the USS Frederick and went back to Vietnam and ports of call in the Pacific.

The Frederick got back to the coast of Vietnam just in time for the initial Paris Peace talks and was part of a very large demonstration off the coast of North Vietnam where there was a virtual flotilla of troop carriers.

The situation did not escalate, and the ship sailed back to the Philippines with its battalion of Marines and the war was winding down. During this cruise, Bailey was promoted from quartermaster 3 to

quartermaster 2.

His next transition in the Navy was to Coastal River Division 22, to become trained in survival evasion resistance and escape as well as become a light weapons expert, and lastly to instructor school, so Bailey could train others.

Bailey became qualified as the boat captain on 31-foot Patrol Boat River 36-foot MinBailey Armored Troop Carrier (and the patrol craft fast or "swiftboat." He recalls this as a rewarding assignment and set him up attitude-wise to become an Army Special Forces soldier, with the Green Berets.

After that, Bailey had over a year left in his enlistment so was yet again assigned back to a ship bound for the western Pacific on his third "cruise."

This time he was yet again onto a new frigate, the USS Marvin Shields, as the leading petty officer in charge of the navigation division. During this cruise, Bailey was promoted again, from quartermaster 2 to quartermaster 1.

Bailey then exited the U.S. Navy and relocated to Logan, Utah, and Utah State University to begin studies for his bachelor of science degree in wildlife science.

While at Utah State, he learned that the U.S. Army Special Forces were very interested in him. Bailey was a survival, weapons and navigation instructor, and had been on river gunboats during his Navy time. So, Bailey joined the Utah Army National Guard, 19th Special Forces Group, as a staff sergeant, the same rank as when he left the Navy.

The Army first sent him to Airborne School, and then he began his Green Beret training. In his junior year, Bailey transferred to Southern Illinois University to be closer to his wife and two sons. He then served with the 12th Special Forces Group

(Reserve) and was promoted again, to sergeant first class.

Bailey finished his degree a year later and accepted a commission as a new lieutenant in the U.S. Army.

In ROTC, Bailey graduated No. 1 in his class and was the distinguished military graduate, as well as the Presidents Saber awardee at Southern Illinois University 1981.

Upon graduation and being promoted to second lieutenant, Bailey remained with the 12th Special Forces Group for six months awaiting his return to active duty and the infantry officer basic course at Fort Benning, Georgia.

Six months later, Bailey graduated as the honor leadership =graduate, and recipient of the expert infantryman's badge.

From the infantry officer basic course, Bailey went to the Army pathfinder course where he was to learn how to parachute behind lines and set up aircraft landing strips and helicopter landing zones, and to conduct air traffic control of all aircraft involved in war.

Bailey graduated and was then sent to the Army Airborne Ranger course, the premier leadership course of the military services. He graduated and got his "TAB" in January 1982 and was sent on his first assignment as a platoon leader in the 21st Infantry Battalion of the 9th Infantry Division at Fort Lewis, Washington.

He served as a platoon leader for 18 months was promoted to first lieutenant and volunteered to serve with the Airborne Rangers in the Second Ranger Battalion at Fort Lewis.

Upon successfully completing a year as a ranger platoon leader, Bailey was selected for promotion to captain and was offered the position of company commander in the newly reorganized 1st Special Forces Group at Fort Lewis.

Bailey held the position of com-



CONTRIBUTED

Jerry Bailey, of Cambridge, takes command of a U.S. Army Special Forces unit.

pany commander for more than two years and then received orders to attend the infantry officers advance course, back again to Fort Benning.

He was sent to the combined arms staff school at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, and to the Special Forces officer course. He was then assigned to 1st Battalion, 7th Special Forces Group as the detachment commander of a Special Forces "A TEAM."

At the same time, he enrolled in the Special Forces Spanish language course for six months. After this his, A TEAM deployed to Honduras, where he would serve two deployments.

During that time, Bailey was the only Special Forces officer in Honduras for long periods. In 1988, the U.S. Embassy was attacked and firebombed by leftist guerillas, and he was ordered to the capital city of Tegucigalpa to assist the U.S. Embassy in "non-combatant evacuation" planning. For that work, he was awarded the Joint Service Achievement Medal from the commanding general of Southern Command. While serving in Honduras, he earned the Joint Services Commendation Medal.

He later returned to Fort Bragg, assigned to the 1st Special Operations Command. He received orders to the 37th Special Forces Battalion in

Panama just days before an invasion was to begin there in December 1989.

He spent seven months in Panama, and then the 37th was redeployed back to Fort Bragg, but Bailey didn't go with them. He went, instead, to advanced civil schooling to get his master's degree with a secondary specialty of foreign area officer. He was accepted to the University of Texas at Austin where 18 months later he would receive my master of arts degree in Latin American government, history and anthropology.

Soon afterward he was chosen to become the director of Latin American graduate studies at Fort Bragg and the special warfare regional studies course. There, he could work without fear of deployment and be home each night with his sons. For the next three years, he served in this position, and the retired as a Green Beret major.

On the first day of May 1995, he made his last parachute jump, turned in his gear and retired from active duty with 24 years of honorable service.

Editor's Note: A version of article originally appeared in "We Remember, So You Won't Forget: Stories of Cambridge and Deerfield Veterans" published in 2017 by the Cambridge Veterans Memorial Committee and Hometown News.

Celebrating those who served
A Big THANK YOU to our Local Veterans

TRUCKSTAR
COLLISION CENTER, INC.

TRUCKSTARCOLLISION.COM
38 West Nelson Street in Deerfield | 608.764.8374