

# Inside ED

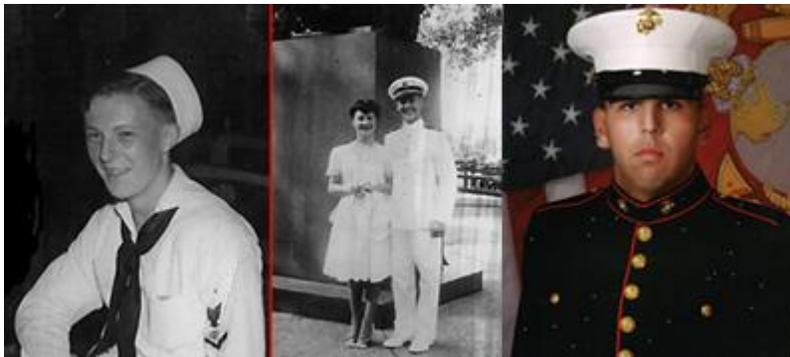
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a newsletter for ED employees

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## ED's Veterans and Military Family Members: Proud Service to Our Country in the Past, Present, and Future (Part II)

**W**e continue our salute to ED's veterans and military family members in this issue, featuring stories submitted by ED employees about their experiences as military family members or members of the armed forces.



“Our freedoms are guided by the service of so many heroes,” first lady Michelle Obama has said. “When I’ve had the chance to meet with [military] men and women and their families, I have always walked away feeling awed by their courage and their sacrifice.” We at *Inside ED* also have been awed by these tales of bravery, valor, patriotic spirit, and, indeed, heroism.

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### Saved From the Frigid Sea

—Maureen Dowling, Office of Innovation and Improvement (OII)

OII's Maureen Dowling says, “The attached veteran story is about my dad, who served in the U.S. Navy for 24 years, 1940–1964.”

Storekeeper Third Class John J. Dowling, Jr. was stationed at his gun position on the deck of the USS Detroit as it plowed through the frigid swells of the Bering Sea. It was a bitter cold morning in January 1943. The Detroit was on patrol to prevent further Japanese penetration of the

Aleutians. As the weather deteriorated, Dowling remembers his chief tossing him a life jacket and shouting for him to put it on immediately. Within moments of his cinching himself into the jacket, a huge wave hit the Detroit and swept Dowling overboard into the turbulent freezing sea. The Detroit had to maintain its patrol and so radioed trailing ships to be on the lookout for him. As the Detroit disappeared from sight, incredibly, a sense of peace and calm settled on Dowling. He knew it was Sunday morning, and he recalled Sunday mornings past when he attended Mass with his mother in Naugatuck, Conn. He thought that he likely would have been attending Mass with her that morning had he been at home. He thought that this was the end; his life would come to a close here in the cold north Pacific.



But these waters had no claim on Dowling, as he was spotted by sailors of the USS Indianapolis cruising in the Detroit's wake. They had picked up the Detroit's radio call for a sailor overboard. As the Indianapolis approached Dowling, its seamen shouted for him to catch a line they threw. In spite of his freezing fingers and the rough sea, Dowling grabbed it and held on as he was hauled toward the Indianapolis' hull. The seamen pulled Dowling up on to the Indianapolis. Their relief and excitement for a successful save could only be matched by the humor of Dowling's understated reply to their expressions of concern. He said, "I'm okay!" just before collapsing on the deck.

According to a news article about the event, "The local man was rushed to the sick bay and given treatment, with last rites of the Roman Catholic Church also being administered. On his recovery, medical officers told him that had he been five minutes longer in the water, he would have died from the extreme cold of the sea." Dowling stayed on the Indianapolis for another five days before transferring to the USS Tappahannock and then returning to the Detroit, where he remained until March 1943.

Dowling's activity during World War II: Pacific Area, Coral Sea, Guadalcanal, Aleutians, Philippines. Significant awards: American Defense Service Medal, Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal, World War II Victory Medal, Korean Service Medal, Philippine Liberation Medal.



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## Blue to Green

—Kathleen Howard, Office for Civil Rights (OCR)

My nephew, Richard Bloom, entered the Navy on Sept. 7, 2001 (four days before the World Trade Center towers came down). He was stationed at Naval Station Mayport in Jacksonville, Fla. He spent time attached to the USS Roosevelt, which deployed out of Norfolk, Va. He became a crew chief for the VS32 fighter planes, (pictured at

right) and had his name on one of the planes, as per tradition. He did at least two tours on the USS Enterprise, one of which is pictured below at left, where Academy Award winner Robin Williams came to entertain the troops in 2003. Richard was honorably discharged from the Navy in September 2005 due to the Navy base closures and the higher-ranking or more senior



personnel transferring into the remaining bases.

In September 2005, Richard entered the Operation Blue-to-Green program at Fort Knox, Ky., which facilitates the transfer of qualified Air Force and Navy individuals to active duty in the Army. After completing additional training, he entered the Army, where he was attached to a unit in Fort Hood, Texas, as a supply corporal for a tank division, with his mother—my sister, Marybeth Singleton). He was deployed to Baghdad shortly thereafter, where he was injured more than once due to his close proximity to

improvised explosive devices (IEDs).

Despite losing several close friends in one IED incident, he reenlisted for an additional five years and transferred to Fort Carson, Colo., upon his return from Baghdad. From there he was deployed to Afghanistan in May 2009. Since his return, he has become a sergeant. He is looking at another deployment in March 2012.

Thank you for allowing me to honor Richard's service to this country.

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### **The Peril of Service**

—Denise McGland, Office of Management (OM)

Sgt. 1st Class Denise L. McGland served in the United States Army for over 21 years before retiring. She served in food service and administrative positions and as a paralegal specialist, with assignments at Fort Jackson, S.C., Hunter Army Airfield in Savannah, Ga., Fort Myer, Va., and Fort McNair, Washington, D.C. She also served two tours in Korea as well as tours in Hawaii and Germany.

Her career changed on 9/11 while stationed at the Office of Staff Judge Advocate at Fort McNair.



McGland recalls that it was a bright sunny day, and the unit was conducting weapons training. During a break, there appeared to be a fire near the Potomac River. Soldiers were told to return to their offices immediately, where they were informed that there had been an attack at the Pentagon and at the World Trade Center in New York. The office was told to prepare for mass casualties. There were several soldiers in her unit who passed away that day. When the list of casualties was released, that day would become personal.

It was while stationed at Fort Jackson that she met a young specialist named Jose O. Calderon, and they became best friends. McGland recalls, “While at an Organizational Day event, we had rented a canoe, and while in the water, the canoe flipped over. Jose assisted me and another soldier from drowning until help could arrive.”

Years passed, and McGland and Calderon were reunited at Fort McNair. The last time Denise would hear from Jose was two weeks prior to 9/11. After hearing of his passing, she called his home to see whether it was a mistake that her best friend had been killed. Words could not describe the pain of losing him and all those who perished that dreadful day. Jose was laid to rest at Arlington National Cemetery on Dec. 1, 2001.



While on tour in Germany, McGland was selected as the senior paralegal for the Criminal Investigation Task Force at Fort Belvoir, which was created in early 2002 by the U. S. Department of Defense to conduct investigations of detainees captured in the war on terrorism.

Her awards and decorations include: Meritorious Service Medal (4th award), Army Commendation Medal (3rd award), Army Achievement Medal (3rd award), Army Good Conduct Medal (6th award), National Defense Medal (2nd award), Global War on Terrorism

Service Medal, Korean Defense Service Medal, Military Outstanding Service Award, Non-commissioned Officer Professional Development Medal (3), Army Service Ribbon, Overseas Service Ribbon (4), Driver and Mechanic Badge, Bronze German Armed Forces Marksmanship Badge, and Army Unit Superior Award (3).

McGland currently is a departmental directives management officer in OM.

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## **Soldiers Get Cavities Too!**

—Nancy Paula Gifford, Federal Student Aid (FSA)

I would like to honor my father, Leonard E. Zbikowski, who served with distinction in the Korean War. Dad was the first dentist drafted, and, as a result, he appeared onscreen in the “Movietone News,” a newsreel that ran from 1928 to 1963 in the United States.



When he arrived in South Korea by boat after riding out a typhoon, he arrived at his unit in the U.S. Army 123rd Field Artillery. Dad was a captain. When he reported to the battlefield commander, he was advised, "Captain, you are not on my roster. I will be happy to send you back to the States for reassignment." Dad replied, "Soldiers get cavities too!" His commanding officer allowed him to stay, and he became part of the Mobile Army Surgical Hospital, or MASH, unit. Throughout my years with him (he went to heaven in 2003), he always spoke of the comradeship he had with his fellow soldiers. He served jointly with a British unit that held formal card parties to relax, complete with fine china and foods brought from India. The Brits would be clothed in full dress uniform to entertain their guests, who arrived in battle fatigues.



Dad and his comrades fought and repaired the wounded with bravery and valor. What I did not know until he died was that he received two Bronze stars for valor. In one instance, he and a fellow soldier rescued a pilot in a flaming plane shot down over enemy lines. In another, his tent mate was lost behind enemy lines. Dad and two others secured a Jeep to find him, crossing a mine field to find their comrade in arms. Dad did not consider himself a hero; he just did his job.

Dad never shared the heartache and atrocities of war. He suffered that privately. Rather, he lived a life espousing loyalty to our country and the importance of giving your all in the worst of situations.

In the photo above at right, Zbikowski is pictured on the 39th parallel, in Korea in 1951. At left, he is in Korea at Christmas in 1951.

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## Even Dozen

—Robert Estep, FSA

My name is Robert Eugene Estep III, and I served for over 12 years in the United States Air Force. I attained the rank of staff sergeant during six years in the enlisted corps and was stationed at Lackland AFB in Texas, Keesler AFB in Mississippi, Bolling AFB in Washington, D.C., the Pentagon, and Eskan Air Base in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. During my six years in the officer corps, I attained the rank of captain and was stationed at Maxwell AFB in Alabama, Sheppard AFB in Texas, Vandenberg and Travis AFBs in California, and Camp Wolverine in Kuwait City, Kuwait.



In the photo at right, I am pictured in 2004 with Alfonse, a K-9 Purple Heart recipient. Below, I am with my wife, Kristisa Robinson Estep, at her promotion ceremony when she achieved the rank of captain.



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## Weekend Warrior

—Melissa Torchon, FSA

My name is Melissa Torchon, and I work as an education program specialist in the Program Support Group of the Impact Aid Program.



I am currently serving in the world's greatest Air Force! I am attached to the 88th Aerial Port Squadron in McGuire AFB, N.J., and serve as a member of the U.S. Air Force Honor Guard team at the 11th FSS, Andrews AFB, Md. I am a "weekend warrior," as we reservists are known, so I balance my days between working at ED and my service.

I plan to make a progressive career in the military and retire after my 20+ years of service. I enlisted after 9/11, thus receiving a ribbon for enlisting during time of war.



The following release was published by the Armed Forces News Agency upon my graduation from basic training:

*Air Force Reserve Airman Melissa Torchon graduated from basic military training at Lackland AFB, San Antonio, Texas. The airman completed an intensive, eight-week program that included training in military discipline and studies, Air Force core values, physical fitness, and basic warfare principles and skills. Airmen who complete basic training earn four credits toward an associate in applied science degree through the Community College of the Air Force. She is the daughter of Lourdes Marotiere of Spencer Ave., Queens Village, N.Y. Torchon graduated in 1998 from Math and Science Campus Magnet, Cambria Heights, N.Y., and received a master's degree in 2006 from State University of New York, Stony Brook.*

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## Languages and Literature

—David Tsuneishi, Institute for Education Sciences (IES)

My father, Warren Tsuneishi, was born on July 4, 1921, and passed away in 2011. He considered himself a “real live nephew of Uncle Sam.” He served in the military intelligence service (MIS) from 1943 to 1946. In addition, his brothers Hughes, Noel, Paul, and James, as well as his sisters Francis and Florence, also served in either the MIS or the Allied Translation and Interpreters Service.



My father's posts included Leyte Island, Philippines; Okinawa Island, Japan; and Korea. He was in the Philippines when [General MacArthur](#) returned. Like the other Japanese Americans and others who served in the MIS, he interpreted captured documents, interrogated prisoners, and performed other duties.

The service of the MIS in the Pacific theater of World War II was so successful that it prompted Maj. Gen. Charles Willoughby, Gen. Douglas MacArthur's chief of staff for military intelligence, to say, "The Nisei shortened the Pacific War by two years and saved possibly a million American lives and saved probably billions of dollars." (Note: "Nisei" refers to a daughter or son of Japanese immigrants who is born and educated in the U.S.)

While on Okinawa, he translated the inscriptions on a number of bells and was able to identify the castle from which they came. Years later, while at the Library of Congress, he was asked to translate inscriptions on a bell and found it came from the same castle. While stationed in Korea, he was awarded the Bronze star (pictured at [wherever]).

After the war, he took advantage of the GI Bill and earned master's degrees in Oriental literature and library science from Columbia University. He used these degrees as the basis for a distinguished career at Yale University, where he was curator of the Far Eastern Collection, and at the Library of Congress, from which he retired in 1993 as chief of the Asian Division.

For additional biographical information, please see [this link](#).

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## A Small-Town Girl Takes on the World

—Maria Broschi, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS)

I announced to my mother and father during spring 1987 that I wanted to join the military. My father was elated, as were my uncles — all military men from various branches of service: Navy, Army, and Air Force. My mother, however, was far from pleased because, in her mind, she envisioned her only daughter getting into dangerous situations and would have rather I stayed home, basking in the safety of Vermont. However, by this time, I had made up my mind, and I contacted an Air National Guard recruiter.



My recruiter, Master Sgt. Gerry Hall, asked me what I wanted to do in the military. My answer was immediate: “Medic.” His response: “Well, we don’t have any slots for medics right now, so what will you do if there aren’t any openings for medics?” I replied: “Well then, I guess I won’t be joining the military.” Miraculously, two days later, my recruiter called me at home and informed me that there was an opening for a medical technician’s slot. I departed for basic training in May 1987, at the age of 20. I didn’t know how profoundly my decision would alter the course of my life.

I have to admit that, although I had some college experience and had worked for two years beyond high school, I was very much what one would consider “clueless.” At 20, I still didn’t know who I was or which direction in life I wanted to take. Life in Vermont was simple: one went to school, worked, maybe went to college or a vocational school to learn a trade, got married, and that was pretty much it. Suddenly, I was thrust into a world of rigid structure, where one was yelled at for not doing such things as “saluting the toilet paper” (a practice whereby one folded the corner of a square of toilet paper while it was still on the roll), wearing one’s locker key outside of one’s shirt (one unfortunate trainee made this mistake and was ordered to run around the barracks while holding said offending key and yelling: “I will not wear my key outside my shirt”), and not eating everything on one’s plate (the food in question was typically a gelatinous, unrecognizable mass of mystery “goo,” ladled in huge portions, assigned by a chow chef). I can now laugh about all of this, of course, but at the time, I was a petrified, scrawny, never-left-home-before 20-year-old. The terror of basic training wore off as the weeks wore on. I gained some muscle, my health, resolve, and graduated from basic training. I then departed for 36 weeks of additional training via technical school at Sheppard Air Force Base in Wichita Falls, Texas.

Sheppard was the place where I would learn to be a medical technician. During my 36 weeks of training, I learned everything about nursing services: bedside patient care, emergency room

procedures, assisting with minor surgeries, sterilizing instruments, wound care, and battlefield medicine. I developed a sense of camaraderie with my fellow students and even played flag football (most of the students at the time were men). I wasn't much of a flag football player, but the guys admired my spunk all the same.

After graduating from technical school, my career took me back to Vermont, then to Germany, Utah, Virginia, France, and Austria. I experienced what true poverty was during a humanitarian mission in Niger on a joint Air Force-Army mission. Our clinic saw hundreds of patients, some of whom traveled for hours just to be seen. My adventures in Niger were followed by adventures in Crete, during Operation Allied Force, where I worked with the Navy. Crete was followed by Operation Enduring Freedom in Oman, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar.

My last tour was in Iraq, for which I volunteered for Operation Iraqi Freedom. I was stationed at the 332nd Expeditionary Hospital. I tended wounded military personnel, civilians, and insurgents, and I indeed did witness the horrors of war, as well as the bravery and dedication of our nation's military personnel. I also developed an even deeper sense of appreciation and understanding of a culture entirely alien to my own.

Twenty years of service taught me much about myself and the world around me. I strongly believe that I would not be the kind of person I am today without having experienced life in the military. I have a strong sense of duty, honor, patriotism, and commitment to service. I also have developed focus, determination, and confidence—all traits that have helped me to succeed despite obstacles and adverse conditions. While my experiences in the military were challenging at times, I don't regret for one instant my decision to serve my country, and I'll always be proud to call myself a U.S. Air Force veteran.



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## 40 Years of RADAR

—Phillip Brumback, FSA

I am Senior Master Sgt. Phillip “RADAR” Brumback, Air National Guard, retired. I joined the Navy through delayed enlistment while a high school senior in February 1970. Upon my retirement on April 12, 2011, my total service for pay was 40 years, 10 months, 26 days. Below at right, I am pictured during my Navy days in the 1970s.

First, it was basic training and technical schools, and, in 1972, I was reassigned to serve as an operations specialist aboard the [USS Dale \(DLG-19\)](#). Work included maintaining Combat Information Center displays of strategic and tactical information. During this time (1972–1974), we traveled between the Mediterranean and the North during the 1973 [Yom Kippur War](#).

In 1976, I joined the Kentucky Air National Guard, where my work



included a variety of communications and information management tasks. In addition, I served for a number of years as a maintenance management specialist, where work included planning, scheduling, and organizing the use and maintenance of aircraft, engines, munitions, missiles, space systems, aerospace ground equipment, and associated support systems.

In 1989, I accepted a position with ED in Philadelphia, and transferred to the Pennsylvania Air National Guard. I continued to work as a maintenance management specialist until accepting the position of first sergeant. This involved being the principal adviser to the commander on all issues related to the enlisted force, including on topics such as the health, esprit de corps, discipline, mentoring, well-being, career progression, professional development, and recognition of all assigned enlisted members. In addition, I served as a contracting superintendent for almost five years and as a supply management specialist. This work included supervising and performing item and monetary accounting and inventory stock control, financial planning, and funds control.

As a child, I was very much moved by JFK's January 1961 inaugural address, which included the famous phrase, "...and so, my fellow Americans: ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country." I did my best.



*Brumback with his oldest son Adam, who is now on full-time active duty in the Air Force, and did a tour in Iraq.*

Brumback in a 2007 newspaper photo with his son Adam, who is on active duty as a senior airman in the U.S. Air Force, and served in Iraq in May through November 2006. The newspaper article detailed the older Brumback's hardscrabble upbringing and his father's military service, which encouraged him to enlist.

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**“I Will Do a New Thing ...” [Isaiah 43:19]**

—Countess Clarke Cooper, FSA

Though many of ED's service members have been a part of the military for years, others have just begun their tenure. After 18 years of public service in the federal government, Countess Clarke Cooper of FSA recently took the oath to join the D.C. Air National Guard.

She says:

*I had been interested in joining for nearly 13 years. While I was studying for my master's degree in divinity at Howard University in the 1990s, I was approached by a recruiter about joining the military chaplaincy candidate program. She was interested in having me join and made several attempts over the years, but the timing never seemed right. I made one last attempt two years ago, and everything came together beautifully. In January 2009, I received a direct commission as a captain into the U.S. Air Force Chaplain Corps, and graduated from the Basic Chaplain Course in June 2011, with special recognition for student leadership. Military chaplains provide for the religious and spiritual needs of military personnel and their families. Unlike any other position in the armed forces, chaplains have privileged communications, which means that military members can speak freely with them about virtually anything. There is confidentiality and no fear of retribution.*



*I like the idea of serving my country not only in the civilian sector at FSA but also in the armed forces by utilizing gifts and talents that I wouldn't otherwise utilize in a workplace. Quite honestly, I love having the opportunity to sing, play, preach, pray, counsel, and bring cheer and comfort to the nation's service members for divine purposes in the workplace! As chaplains, we hear many sad and tragic stories, but we also share in the joys, the triumphs, and the hope of the human spirit. My experience has been short, but it's been awesome.*

In the photo at right, four chaplains sing the National Anthem in four-part harmony at the graduation banquet for Cooper's Basic Chaplains Course. Cooper (far left) formed the ensemble and led rehearsals.

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## Rescue Ranger

—Kirk Winters, Office of Communications and Outreach (OCO)

My 29-year-old nephew, Sal Portelli, became a veteran in August 2011. He's been in pararescue, a special-operations unit of the Air Force, for the past six years.

He went through a lot to pass training to get in, and he did some amazing things while there. I am so proud of him. At [this link](#), you can read an article about him that was published when he won a distinguished rescue award.

In fact, his rescuing doesn't stop there. During his first week back in civilian life in his home town of Manhattan, Kan., his sister yelled at him to "get to the pool!" He jumped off the couch, ran to the neighborhood pool, jumped the 6-foot fence, and administered CPR to a gray-faced little girl on the deck who'd been pulled from the bottom of the pool and wasn't breathing.

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DAEGU AIR BASE, Republic of Korea — Senior Airmen Salvatore Portelli (right) and Ryan Sjurson, from the 320th Special Tactics Squadron, discuss casualty information during a mass casualty exercise here March 27. The scenario is part of the 353rd Special Operations Group's annual operational readiness exercise. Airman Portelli recently won the Air Rescue Association 2010 Richard T. Kight Award. The award is named in honor of Brig. Gen. Richard T. Kight, the first commander of the Air Rescue Service, and is presented annually to recognize an active duty or reserve component member who has contributed to the overall effectiveness of the rescue mission area through management, innovation or other outstanding achievement. (U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Aaron Cram)

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## **Educating Through the Army**

—Richard Crum, FSA

I have served in the Army for 11 years now. I enlisted into active duty in January 2000 as a 23-year-old infantryman and was stationed at Fort Drum, N.Y., for two years. I then joined the Army Reserve and went on my first deployment to Kuwait for 16 months, working transportation and port operations, in which role I scheduled the transport of military equipment into and out of Iraq. After that tour, at the age of 27 I went to college at California University of Pennsylvania. I wanted to graduate fast, so I took 21 credits each semester and graduated in two years. While I was in Pennsylvania, I joined the National Guard [Stryker](#) infantry unit at Penn State University. I deployed with that unit in 2009, and we conducted combat operations out of Baghdad for nine months.

I like the National Guard because I know that, without the Army, I would have never been able to pay for a college education. More importantly, without the life experience and discipline provided to me by the Army, I am not so sure I would have had the confidence in myself and/or the tools to prioritize my life in order to set clear life goals and follow a well thought-out plan in order to achieve those goals. Further, after years of training and living with the same soldiers on year-long deployments, you build a lot of good friendships. Being in the National Guard allows you to meet up with soldiers who are really your extended family for one weekend every month and discuss life issues while training.

At right, I am pictured in Abu Ghraib, Iraq, on a mission to dispense school supplies to students. I and several other American soldiers lived with Iraqi soldiers on a small base, and the two groups often would share meals together to build our communication skills. I am on the right side of the photo, in the center.

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## **Marine Invasion**

—Eric Young, Office of the General Counsel (OGC)





After Officer Candidate School (officer boot camp), Basic School (infantry school), and Judge Advocate School (military law), I was stationed at Camp Lejeune, N.C., as a judge advocate. There were the traditional young Marine petty crimes, but we also had serious crimes, including theft, rape, and even a double murder that resulted in a death sentence. The work was exciting and fast, and you quickly progressed to bigger and bigger cases. Over a two-year period, I disposed of a case on average every three days.

Being a judge advocate was great, but I wanted to command Marines. I was selected to be the company commander of 978 Marines in the largest company in the Corps. We supported operations, providing supplies, fuel, trucks, forklifts, payroll, and everything else an infantry unit needed so it could fight. I lived for months at a time in tents supporting infantry units.

I transferred to Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii, and was selected to be the staff secretary for the commanding general of the only active Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB). I saw every piece of paperwork the general saw and coordinated all of his command staff. It was a real learning opportunity to see how all the parts of a real combat command operated (air, ground, logistics, personnel, intelligence, and operations). Because of my billet, I controlled the top secret codes for special weapons that were in the inventory.



The MEB deployed to Desert Shield/Storm, and I took my second command, Combat Replacement Company #23. We exercised and trained for months in the desert. However, within three days, it was recognized that the coalition had overwhelmed the enemy and we demobilized back to our home commands. We were happy the war was over but disappointed that we never entered into the real war zone and that we were not a fighting element in the victory.

I changed duty stations to Henderson Hall, near the Pentagon. I completed Airborne Jump School, where I injured a knee for the second time and had to leave the Marine Corps. I served for over 10 years and learned so much. I know that being a

Marine still invades every part of my life and the way I do things. They had small sayings, rules, and leadership principles that really worked, and I still use those in my work and daily life.

In the photos above at right and at left, I (at left in both pictures) am laying a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier with my brother, Staff Sergeant Alan Young, U.S. Army (escorted by

Tomb guards).

Marines are always distinguishable by their uniforms, which have not changed in 200 years, and their unique military bearing. The Marine uniform has a dark navy jacket and lighter blue pants and a white cover (called a “hat” by civilians). Those blue pants carry a red stripe called a “blood stripe” representing the blood of Marines who have died. Marines are also called Leathernecks because their uniforms have leather collars. The leather collars were developed during the revolution to help prevent Marines from being cut by sabers across the neck and to prevent garroting (strangulation) when they attacked and boarded enemy ships. Still today the Marine dress uniforms have a leather high-necked collar. This distinguishes a Marine from all the other services because the other military services wear a dress jacket, tie, and shirt.

Semper Fidelis (Always Faithful)

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## **Air Assaults**

—Bradley Haas, Office of Postsecondary Education (OPE)

At age 17, Rick Gaona enlisted in the Army and spent the next 21 years serving his country all across the globe. He was first stationed at Ft. Campbell, Kan., with the 101st Airborne—the “Screaming Eagles”—a U.S. Army division trained for air assault operations. Within one year of enlisting, he saw active duty, touring the Sinai Peninsula on a peacekeeping mission between Egypt and Israel. He then spent five years in Germany with the 11th Aviation Pathfinders, also an aviation formation. During this span, he conducted missions throughout Africa and the Middle East designed to explore beyond the area occupied by friendly forces to gain information about enemy forces or features of the environment. Gaona returned to the U.S. in 1989, and spent four years with the 82nd Airborne unit in Fort Bragg, N.C. Later that year he was deployed for his second active duty tour, parachuting into Panama during [Operation Just Cause](#). His third active duty deployment came in August 1990, during [Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm](#). In 1993, he completed his service with the 82nd Airborne and became a scout platoon sergeant in South Korea, where he worked in the joint security area, the only portion of the Korean Demilitarized Zone where South and



North Korean forces stand face-to-face. In 1994, Rick was sent back to the U.S. to serve as a drill sergeant in Fort Jackson, S.C. During his five-year tenure at Fort Jackson, he was promoted to first sergeant and later to senior instructor at the drill sergeant school. Gaona joined the faculty at the University of Montana and served as an assistant professor of military science from 1999 to 2001. Finally, in 2001 Gaona returned to South Korea for two years to work with general staff.

Gaona thoroughly enjoyed his military career because, he says, “It was always an adventure. No day was ever the same.” As my colleague in OPE, he currently works as a program officer, administering grants to Hispanic-serving institutions.

### **Almost Half a Century**

—Nate Hicks, OCR-Kansas City

Nate Hicks was born in Dayton, Ohio, and entered active duty in the U.S. Marine Corps on July 10, 1967. After 30 years of distinguished military service, Hicks retired on Aug. 1, 1997, having reached the rank of master gunnery sergeant. During his career, Hicks served in various logistics-supply administrative positions and as an equal opportunity advisor in the U.S. and abroad, including assignments in Japan, Chicago, Detroit, California, and North Carolina. He



also completed the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute at Patrick Air Force Base, Fla. For his outstanding service, Hicks received two Meritorious Service Medals, the Navy Commendation Medal, the Navy Achievement Medal, the National Defense Service Medal with one star, the Sea Service Deployment Ribbon, and the Overseas Service Ribbon.

After retiring from active military service, Hicks began his civilian employment in May 1998, when he began serving his country once again by enforcing civil rights laws with OCR in Kansas City, Mo. He is an equal opportunity specialist, investigating allegations of discrimination in educational institutions in ED’s Region VII.

He had been married to Marian Hicks for over 38 years. They have two daughters and two grandsons. Hicks is proud to have worked continuously for the U.S. government for almost 44 years.

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### **USS Kirk: Rescue at Sea**

—David Hyson, Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO)

For many Americans, the lasting image of the Vietnam War came from the nightly news where U.S. Marine helicopters swooped down to the U.S. Embassy and the roof of a nearby CIA safe house to rescue the last 1,000 Americans in Saigon and some 6,000 Vietnamese and their

families who worked for them. But there was another evacuation that didn't get as much attention. Tens of thousands of Vietnamese found other ways to escape. They left in boats and helicopters and headed to the South China Sea, where they knew the U.S. Navy's 7th Fleet waited.



One of those U.S. Navy ships was a small destroyer escort, the USS Kirk. I was a petty officer stationed on the Kirk. As the evacuation began, the early morning sky started filling up with helicopters. Huge marine transports carried the lucky few out of Saigon and headed for the many carriers in our group. Behind them, I saw scores of smaller helicopters packed with pilots, family and friends. The Kirk had only a small flight deck but started directing these helicopters in.



Amid the chaos, a larger helicopter moved toward the Kirk. It was a [Chinook CH-47](#), with two rotors that would tear the ship apart if it tried to land. After circling the ship several times, the pilot understood the only way for the passengers to get safely to the Kirk was for him to hover over the fantail and have the refugees jump to the waiting hands of sailors on the ship. Once the passengers were out, the pilot flew about 60 yards from the Kirk. I watched as he leaned the helicopter to the right, lowered its wheels into the water, and jumped out of the left-hand side of the cockpit. A split second later, the giant Chinook exploded (pictured above), with huge broken pieces of sharp blades flying off in every direction. I saw the pilot surface a couple of yards from the overturned helicopter.



Our ship had already lowered our small rescue boat, and as soon as the explosion was over it raced out to pick up the pilot (pictured at left). The pilot and his family were among some 200 refugees rescued from 16 helicopters that day. A day later, the refugees were moved to a larger transport ship. This is, however, only part of the story. The Kirk also participated in the rescue of refugees from Cambodia, and later went on to lead a small convoy of ships in a covert mission to rescue the South Vietnamese Navy and some 33,000 refugees. I and my fellow Kirk crewman were awarded the Vietnam Service Medal, the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal twice, the Meritorious Unit Commendation twice, and the Humanitarian Service Medal by the U.S. Navy for our efforts.

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## Collector to Commander

—Cynthia Dorfman, OCO

My little brother, Chris, was a scrappy guy. One of my friends used to say that he always looked like he had just been in a fight. To keep him from getting into trouble when our father was in Vietnam in the late 1960s, his godfather introduced him to collecting campaign memorabilia. To get him started, I gave him some buttons for John F. Kennedy's run for president. Our great-Aunt Ada gave him a Teddy Roosevelt bandana, and his godfather took him "picking" at antique shops and in private collections. It gave him a great sense of American history. Little did he know he would become a part of history through his career when he grew up.

Cmdr. Christopher B. Hearn, U.S. Naval Reserve (retired), spent over 30 years working at the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), with almost as many years in his parallel role in the Naval Reserve. During that time, one of his assignments took him to Bosnia in the 1990s. His first letter said that he was staying in a rundown hotel that once had been grand. He found himself in the same hotel where the Archduke Ferdinand stayed the night before he was assassinated—the event that launched World War I, known as “the war to end all wars!” That tour of duty resulted in his raiding a terrorist cell—a house where bombs were being manufactured and inserted into toys. These toys of horror would be attractive to children, who would not suspect them to be weapons and that would injure their families, who were considered



to be enemies because of their religious beliefs and ethnic heritage.

As a commander in the Naval Reserve, his most recent tour was in 2007, in Afghanistan. During a time of a renewed surge, when reservists were being called up, he was called to active duty to be director of intelligence for the Joint Special Task Force. He said, "They must be looking for adult supervision to be calling up a 54-year-old! But I am proud to serve my country!" In his role, he prepared daily intelligence reports for Gen. McChrystal, for which he was awarded a Joint Service Commendation Medal. He also earned a Bronze Star.

In the CIA, he had experience in the Middle East. In 2002, he was a first agency representative with the Counterterrorism Campaign Group. In that position, he coordinated and supervised several complex joint operations with agency components, the military, and other security agencies, and he developed strategy and plans for the execution of counterterrorist operations. That same year, he served as senior operations officer, in which role he helped rebuild a multi-phased planning program that combined in-depth target knowledge with aggressive identification of resources to meet strategic goals. For his work for the CIA, he received two War Zone medals and two Meritorious Unit Citations, among other recognitions.

Chris retired from the CIA in 2009, and from the Naval Reserve in 2010. He has sustained his love of American history and campaign memorabilia, however. He now is serving a second "tour of duty" as president of the American Political Items Collectors organization. Chris, hats off to you (you know, like that Rockefeller boater in your collection)! I am your proud sister.

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## Longtime Service

—Jim Long, OCR



I'm a senior attorney in OCR, Denver Enforcement Office. I served for 23 years as an Army officer in the Judge Advocate General's Corps. While I began as a prosecutor and was the chief of military justice at Fort Hood, Texas, my assignments were many and varied. I worked at the Pentagon, taught at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, was the equivalent of chief counsel at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center, and served at posts from Korea to Germany. During my service, I received six awards of the Meritorious Service Medal and was awarded the Legion of Merit.

I retired from the Army in 1996, as command judge advocate of the Army's worldwide medical command and legal adviser to the surgeon general. I then served as a litigation attorney at the U.S. Department of Energy's Rocky Flats Environmental Technology Site outside Denver. I've been with OCR since 2003.

I come from a military family. One of my American ancestors was a drummer with the American forces during the American Revolution. The earliest “Long” relative we’ve been able to find was killed fighting during the Civil War. My grandfather served in the British Royal Artillery during World War I, and my dad, who served for 28 years as a U.S. Air Force officer, served in World War II, Korea, and during the Vietnam conflict. Although not strictly speaking a military person, my mom served with the British Occupation Forces in Rome and later in Vienna at the end of World War II.

And so, it comes to the present generation of my family. My daughter is an Army doctor serving on active duty at Fort Lewis, Wash., and will be deployed to Iraq in December. While she’s gone, her mom and I will be caring for her daughter who just celebrated her first birthday. Again, not strictly in a military capacity, my older son recently finished a project in Afghanistan to monitor voting fraud using new technologies available on cellular telephones. His research about this issue—so important to our efforts to rebuild Afghanistan—soon will be published in an academic journal.

Through all this, the military members of the family have been supported by a cadre of unsung heroes—our families, particularly our spouses, who have sacrificed convenience, careers, stability, and their own extended families, and endured a lot of frustration to make our service easier. They deserve a big salute!

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## Patrolling the Borders

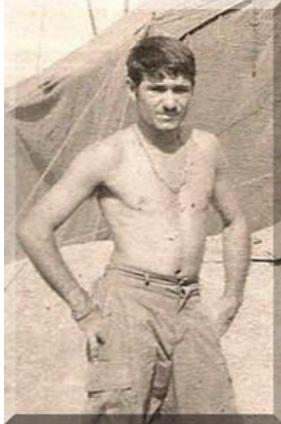
—Phillip Loranger, Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO)

A combat veteran of Vietnam and Operation Desert Storm, OCIO’s Phillip Loranger spent 24 years on active duty in occupations ranging from an infantryman in Vietnam, to counterintelligence agent and signals intelligence intercept, to the first commissioned warrant officer responsible for encrypted communication for all United States and coalition forces during



Desert Storm in 1990. After joining the Army as a high school dropout and achieving a GED on a firebase in [Nui Ba Den / Black Virgin Mountain Vietnam](#) (pictured at right), Loranger earned a master’s degree in technology and information assurance.

On the Cambodian borders of Army field locations, Loranger's duties were to sustain data and voice communication between helicopter companies and ground forces in the midst of the Air Force's bombing of the Ho Chi Minh trail. After spending about 30 days living and operating out of a firebase (a military encampment designed to provide indirect fire artillery fire support to infantry operating in areas beyond the normal range of direct fire support from their own base camps), and then moving to a larger base to patrol the grounds in the jungle and through farm



land, Loranger earned his Combat Infantryman Badge during his assignment with the 3/17 Airmobile Calvary Division. Loranger separated from the service for a few years after his tour of duty in Vietnam, only to return in 1976 to remain an active soldier until 1993.

During Loranger's service, he spent 13 years in Germany patrolling the East German Iron Curtain and assisting those East Germans who made it across by flying in helicopters, traveling in tanks, and spending many cold nights in snow and long weeks in remote forests. He also had the opportunity to travel to France, Italy, England, Austria, and many other countries.

When reminiscing about his experience as the officer in charge of ensuring security of information codes used for secure radio and data communications during Operation Desert Storm, Loranger recalled, "My unit was responsible for the codes that were used to recover all land and air combat operations, as well as the codes used by the special forces for the rescue of a young female soldier from West Virginia. I was awarded two Bronze Stars for my work during my tour of duty in Desert Storm. Additionally, I was the first Army Warrant Officer ever to command a joint (Army, U.S. Marine Corps and U.S. Air Force) unit in a combat zone."

After retirement from the Army's Office of the Secretary for Command, Control, Communications and Computer Systems, Loranger worked for government contractors on projects for the Army and the Department of Defense. He became a federal employee by joining the Federal Aviation Administration, and, in 2009, he joined ED's OCIO as the deputy director for information assurance, which is where he currently serves.

Medals awarded during Loranger's time in the Army are:

Army Achievement; Medal for Civilian Service; Army Commendation Medal; Army Good Conduct Medal, Legion of Merit Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, Republic of Vietnam (RVN) Campaign Medal, Republic of Vietnam (RVN) Civil Action 1C Medal, Republic of Vietnam (RVN) Campaign Medal, Republic of Vietnam (RVN) Gallantry Cross Medal w/Palm, Saudi Arabian Medal for the Liberation of Kuwait, Southwest Asia Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, Kuwait Liberation of Kuwait Medal, Army Service Ribbon, Army Superior Unit Award, Army Presidential Unit Citation, Army Meritorious Unit Citation, Army Overseas Service, Ribbon, Army Achievement Medal Ribbon, Republic of Vietnam (RVN) Gallantry Cross Unit Citation Army Frame, Bronze Stars, and Legion of Merit.

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## **My Dad; My Hero**

—Sharon Lankford, Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE)

“They marched us around some big boulders in the desert and then had us turn around, place our hands over our eyes, and then ‘hunker down’ and brace ourselves.” My dad never talked about his service to the Army much to us, but this much detail about some of the things he did in the Army was a rare treat for me. Daddy (Sgt. 1st Class Alfred L. Lankford) devoted 34 years of his life to the Army and believed in everything America stands for: freedom, justice, and the American way of life. He joined the service in 1948, at just 18 and served in Germany, Korea, and here in the states before he retired in 1982.



Daddy was staunch military, but we weren't a typical military family. After my brother was born in 1955, he and my mom decided that the rest of the family would live in one place while Daddy served in foreign locales. He sacrificed his time with us so that we could maintain a stable family life and not suffer through frequent moves, friends left behind, and school changes whenever he was transferred. I remember getting so excited when Daddy would come home from being overseas and bring us exotic gifts. One year he brought me a beautiful cuckoo clock from the Black Forest area in Germany, and another time he brought me French perfume from Paris.

As a first-rate mechanic, he worked on anything with an engine, and his services were in demand in every locale. His strong work ethic and “no-nonsense” attitude moved him quickly to a leadership position doing what he did best—motivating young soldiers and inspiring them to do their best.

Of all the jobs and assignments he had in the Army, though, the most fascinating one started with his hunkering behind those boulders. “We were told to put our heads between our knees and close our eyes. Then, they detonated the bomb.” The bomb was an atomic bomb nicknamed Smoky, in Nevada Area 2. “The thing I remember most,” he went on, “was seeing the bones in my hand and the mushroom cloud, just like I was standing in front it with my eyes open.”

Daddy, pictured above at right on vacation with my mother in Alaska in 2007, suffered from skin cancer related to those nuclear tests years later but always believed it was all part of his job and necessary in the line of duty. He never complained or placed blame for health conditions that could be traced back to his service. He lived his life proudly as a husband, a father, and a soldier. Daddy passed away in 2007, but his love for the military and all it stands for lives on.

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## **The Silent Service**

—John Manahan, Office of the Deputy Secretary (ODS)

I had the privilege of growing up as a military brat, with my father eventually retiring as a master chief (E-9) in the U.S. Coast Guard. Almost always living in military housing meant all my friends, and the adults I knew, came from every branch of the service. This influenced me greatly as I was deciding on a career, and I was fortunate enough to gain an appointment to the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md. My four years by the bay were an exceptionally tough experience, but I was able to form an extraordinary bond with my classmates and eventual shipmates that can only really be forged from committing your life to the service of your country. Upon my graduation from the academy, I was commissioned as an ensign (O-1) in the Navy and started my training as a nuclear submarine officer. After a year and a half of nuclear engineering training and submarine tactics, I reported to the nuclear fast attack submarine USS Montpelier in Norfolk, Va. During my three years on board Montpelier, I had the opportunity to serve as the division officer for three divisions: Sonar, Main Propulsion, and Communications.



The submarine force is aptly named “the silent service,” and much of the work I did forever will be locked away in a vault. However, I can share that we were able to play a big part in Operation Iraqi Freedom, launching nearly all of our cruise missiles in the opening days of the war. I had the unique opportunity as communications officer to interact with many allied navies, and even troops on the ground.

After our deployment to the Arabian Gulf, I returned stateside, finished my naval nuclear engineer certification, and left for my shore duty rotation. After a quick six months as the security officer for the Naval Historical Center here in D.C., I was reassigned to the Chief of Naval Operations staff at the Pentagon and worked in mission planning. I left the Navy in 2005, as a lieutenant (O-3). I now am a special assistant in ED’s Office of the Deputy Secretary. I am extremely proud of my service and am forever grateful for the experience.

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## **Recruiting New Officers**

—Patty Crisp, OCO

OCO’s Patty Crisp submitted this narrative about her husband, FSA’s Earl Crisp.

Following graduation from Texas Christian University, Earl Crisp volunteered for the Naval Aviation Officer Candidate School program and reported for duty at Naval Air Station (NAS) Pensacola, Fla., in February 1972. He received his commission as an ensign on June 16, 1972. He was carrier-qualified aboard the USS Lexington in August 1973, and received his multi-engine designation and navy wings in November 1973 at NAS Corpus Christi. In January 1974, he reported to NAS Pensacola as a flight instructor and as the assistant director of the

Naval Air Training Command Choir. In 1975, he became the director and toured with the choir across the United States, promoting naval aviation at air shows, patriotic celebrations, and sports venues. They were featured on both television and radio programs. In 1979, he was assigned as a flight instructor at VT-6 in Milton, Fla. Then he deployed to VRC-50 in Cubi Point, Philippines, where he flew C-130 aircraft. During this tour, Crisp's squadron was activated to Northern Japan when Korean Airliner 007 was shot down by a Soviet missile. His squadron was on full alert again when the USS Kitty Hawk collided with a Soviet submarine off the coast of Korea. He transferred to NAS Point Mugu in 1984, as a C-12 (Beachcraft-200) flight instructor, and, in 1986, transferred to Antarctic Development Squadron 6 (VXE-6) and flew C-130s with snow skis attached. Crisp's next assignment was with NAS Point Mugu in California as a navy recruiter for Southern California, where he earned the rank of commander. He transferred to NAS Alameda, also in California, and led his recruiting team to top honors and received the national award of Officer Recruiting Program of the Year in 1991. He was elevated to executive officer of the five-state region and was responsible for both officer and enlisted recruiting programs, managing 232 recruiters. As a result of his success, he was promoted to commanding officer of Detachment One, where he remained until his retirement in 1993.



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## Intelligence and Infantry

—Bob Martin, FSA

I served in the U.S. Army from 1967 to 1977, serving 10 years active duty as a sergeant first class E-7. My military occupational specialty was 97C4LVSF2, which means my expertise was in enlisted counterintelligence, with area studies (offensive counterintelligence), languages, Vietnamese (Saigon dialect), and intelligence photography. I was in Vietnam from 1970 to 1972, as a district intelligence adviser for the Phung Hoang/Phoenix program, Chau Thanh District, Vinh Long Province, Mekong Delta area.

When I wasn't in Vietnam, I conducted counterintelligence investigations and operations in a number of countries. Upon discharge, I returned to school, earned my bachelor's degree, enrolled in graduate school, and dropped out to attend law school, which I attended for a year before I decided I'd had enough of school.

I worked as an Office of Personnel Management investigator from 1986 until 1995, when I was hired by ED.

The photo at left is of me and the infantry adviser I worked with in Vietnam, Rudy Rhodes, from El Paso, Texas (I'm on the right) .



Rudy and I were two-thirds of a three-man U.S. advisory team, working with Vietnamese troops in the Mekong River Delta. He spoke Vietnamese and loved the Vietnamese people. He had been in the country for a long time when I joined the team of which he was the infantry advisor. I've lost touch with him over the years, but if it weren't for him, I wouldn't be here. I learned a lot from him (like when to duck) and when I left, he was still there.

When I first got there, he was not impressed with me as a soldier. That's probably because I had worked in the intelligence end and knew nothing about infantry. But, sometime that year, he told me he thought I had become a good soldier and a good infantryman and that I was good to the Vietnamese people, which he valued above all else. That was high praise from him and validation from a man I admired, and I'll never forget him. I was fortunate enough to make it home, and I hope he was, too. 50,000 of us were not.

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## Mr. Manners

—Kevin Plourde, OCO

My job was about taking care of troops and their families around the world. As a services officer, I helped to support the Air Force Global Mission through feeding troops, managing tent cities, operating field exchanges, attending to fallen comrades, providing fitness activities and off-duty sports programs, and planning base family activities. My last—and most fulfilling—assignment was at the University of Virginia as an assistant professor of aerospace studies for Detachment 890, Air Force ROTC. In this capacity, I was responsible for teaching, training, and mentoring the future officer corps for the Air Force.

One of my most notable experiences was serving as a protocol officer for the chief of staff of the Air Force. In this position I was responsible for planning and directing all aspects of protocol involving senior Air Force leadership assigned to the Pentagon. During my time at the Pentagon, I was deployed to Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar, to provide protocol support to the Combined Air Operations commander. During my deployment, I traveled to many places throughout the area, including Baghdad and Kirkuk, Afghanistan. During one of these trips via an Air Force C130 cargo plane, we encountered ground fire from enemy combatants as our aircraft was taking off from the base.

I retired after 27 years in the service and now am an event services





manager in OCO.

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### **You're in the Army Now**

—Carolyn Toomer, FSA

Not many years ago, most people's idea of military service was Gomer Pyle and Sergeant Carter. To refresh your memory, and for those not familiar with this piece of Americana, there was a 1960s television show called [Gomer Pyle, U.S.M.C.](#) There were other military shows on television



during that time like [Combat!](#) or [M\\*A\\*S\\*H](#), but, as far as I am

concerned, Gomer was the best.

On the show, Gomer Pyle was the lovable marine private from Mayberry, N.C., who managed to mess up all of his orders and created problems mostly for a Sgt. Carter, although sometimes also for everyone else on the show. However, Gomer's wholesome honesty and true-blue American character somehow would resolve all the problems that had occurred during the 30 minutes the show ran.

My experience in the military had few things in common with Gomer's. I began my basic military training at Fort Jackson, S.C. My basic training, like Gomer's, included a 2–5 mile march every day in the blazing hot Carolina sun. I remember the endless number of push-ups, and who can forget those fashionable uniforms? (Pictured below.)

I was in the last class of female soldiers under the Women's Army Corps (WAC). The WAC was a special unit of the Army that was first implemented during World War II. Congress was so impressed with women's contributions during the war that the WAC received military status and was integrated into the Army in 1948. At that time, most of the enlisted women served in office jobs or medical jobs.

Because I was a WAC, I was asked if I wanted to learn how to shoot an M-16 rifle. I said no, which was acceptable ... but I never did figure out what would happen if someone started shooting at me!



Congress eliminated the WAC in 1978, so from then on, instead of being assigned to the WAC upon entering the Army, women were assigned to all the other branches of the Army and in all jobs, except for the combat branches such as infantry, armor, and artillery.

The remainder of my service was very different from its start, but I never forgot how proud we were and what it meant to be a WAC.

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### **Civil Affairs**

—Hugh Walkup, Office of the Secretary

1st Lt. Hugh Walkup served as a civil affairs officer in the central highlands of Vietnam from 1967 to 1968. He worked on refugee resettlement, economic development, school construction, and post-bombing medical assistance and reconstruction. He was awarded a Bronze Star and Meritorious Unit Citation.

As a veteran, he helped organize the Vietnam Veterans Against the War and the Vietnam Veterans Leadership Project. He led the Seattle Veteran's Action Center for three years and helped develop other veterans' outreach programs across the country. He also helped organize and train staff at the original Veterans Administration Vet Centers. Walkup also served as a veterans advocate-representative on the Veterans Administration Commission on Agent Orange in the 1980s. He currently works in the Office of the Secretary.

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### **Family Traditions**

—Stephanie Robinson-Kimble, OGC



Two members of my family have military service that I would like to honor for Veterans Day.

My brother, Paul Washington, Jr. (pictured at right), enlisted in the Marine Corps on Sept. 6, 1989, soon after graduating from Bladensburg High School in Bladensburg, Md. He received his recruit training at the famous Parris Island Marine Recruit Training Battalion in South Carolina. He spent 13 weeks in boot camp learning discipline, fitness, combat survival, and how to be an I.C.E. (Integrity, Character, and Ethics) man.



After graduating from Marine Combat Training, he was assigned to 1st Battalion 2nd Marine Division (Amphibious Assault Division) in Camp Lejeune, N.C. From this duty station, he trained and prepared himself for the dreaded day when he was called to prepare for war in the Persian Gulf, on Aug. 2, 1990. Iraq, led by Saddam Hussein, had invaded Kuwait, which started Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm. My brother was in the Persian Gulf on the USS Guam for a total of nine months. During this time, he trained on combat exercises with Army and Navy SEAL teams.

In January 1991, Paul participated in Operation Eastern Exit, where about 40 Marines and a team of Navy SEALs evacuated American citizens and other foreign natives-noncombatants from the U.S. Embassy in Mogadishu, Somalia. While in Somalia, Paul's unit was attacked by gunfire, with tanks shooting missiles at the embassy walls. At the tender age of 18, he was very fearful for his life. Paul and his fellow soldiers made it out safely, and he received various medals and awards for his actions, including a Combat Action Ribbon.

Throughout his career in the Marine Corps, Paul went to over 15 different countries, fought for his country in two wars, and reached the level of corporal. My brother is proud to have been a Marine, and he considers the time he spent in the Marines as a life lesson that will never be forgotten. Today Paul works for the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

My uncle Sgt. Maj. Willie Johnson (pictured at left) enlisted in the U. S. Marine Corps on May 28, 1954. He graduated from Parris Island as a private first class on Aug. 16, 1954. He was assigned to Camp Lejeune as his first duty station, where he worked as an 81 millimeter mortarman. During his next several tours, he traveled on many different naval ships to different countries, including to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. He was promoted through the ranks to sergeant



E-4 and eventually returned to Camp Lejeune as a marksmanship instructor.

He received extensive training in artillery during tours in Virginia, Okinawa, Japan, and Cuba, where his unit was sent during the Cuban Missile Crisis to help provide security. He put these skills to use in Vietnam in 1965, and again in 1970, when he was involved in high-level and dangerous combat environments.

Johnson was in great demand. He attended drill instructor and recruiters school, after which he helped enlist new Corps members. He continued his involvement in many dangerous assignments, including assisting with the evacuation and closing of the U.S. Embassy in Dai Nang, Vietnam;

serving with the Marine Air Group 26 in New River, N.C. as the senior enlisted marine to the commanding officer marine colonel; and deploying with the Marine Combat Force to Beirut in 1983, where he was involved in the closing of the embassy and its security during the embassy bombing. During his last tour of duty, Johnson was the commanding officer of the Marine Air Group 26 until his retirement on Aug. 31, 1984. Johnson rose in ranks from private first class to command sergeant major within 21 years.

During his career, he received numerous combat awards for distinguished military service, which includes Combat V for Valor awards. He is authorized to wear 15 medals and ribbons for his 30 years of military service in the Corps. He has enjoyed every duty assignment, and he has been blessed to serve and protect his country.

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