

WHAT WAS YOUR DUTY ASSIGNMENT ON CHRISTMAS 1969?

Gary Batty

I was stationed at the Automated Logistics Management Systems Agency in St Louis working with 99 other military and 700 civilians tasked with automating the Army supply system. On Christmas Day I was celebrating with my family and the family of my new bride in Rockford, IL. We were married on the 20th and had a short honeymoon before Christmas.

Larry Baxter

December of 1969 I was a platoon leader in the 562nd Engineer Co, 171st Infantry Brigade at Ft. Richardson, Alaska. It was the practice to fall out with your platoon at 5:30 a.m. By Christmas the temps were in the twenty below range and my wife and I had already acquired our first of 60 sled dogs which would find me representing USARAL in the 1970 World Championship Sled Dog Race . I finished 10th of 40 teams entered. As in OCS I was assigned to be the company's Command Information Officer and given the task of providing sex education to the troops. My presentations were SRO and discussions were wide ranging and "informative". Although only on duty for a couple months I had already served as a Survivor Assistance Officer twice for Alaskans KIA Thanks to my decision to Vol Indef I got to experience actual -56 temps for three days on exercise ACID TEST III...unforgettable 😊
Merry Christmas..Larry & Kathy Baxter

Joe Boyle

After OCS, it was off to Ft. Eustis for the Transportation Officer Orientation course & then the Cargo Officer course. My wife & I lived in Williamsburg while I was at Ft. Eustis - very cool. We packed up our car a few days before Christmas and drove home to Columbus. (I can still see my treasured AR4 speakers sitting on the back seat!) After the holiday we were off to Bremerhaven, Germany, where I was the Movements Officer for about nineteen months. From there it was off to Thailand for an assignment as Chief of Movements, USARSUPTHAI.

Bax, I'm still working on a mental image of you with all those "athletic" dogs in the bitter cold! Ugghh, must be that upstate New York upbringing! Congrats on your achievement - forty-some years later...

Although not about connecting with OCS mates while on duty, here are two "small planet" stories from Army days : (1) I arrived in Bremerhaven in January of 1970, and the officer who greeted me sent me over to the Finance office to arrange travel pay, etc. When I walked in, the Fighting Finance Corps XO who greeted me was a grade school (and rival high school) mate of mine from Columbus ! We ended up being teammates on a basketball team in Bremerhaven. (2) In Thailand, my wife came over on her own to stay with me. We had a bungalow for several months in Pattaya, about 40 clicks up the road from the port of Sattahip. Our bungalow was in a small complex right on the beach road of the Gulf of Siam. One night, we got the hankering for some real American food - and maybe a cold beer. So, I made a pogie-bait run to a military snack bar up the beach near a US R&R facility. As I'm walking along, I see the silhouette of a tall guy & a girl coming toward me in the dark. I do a double-take & say, "Jim?" Sure enough, the fellow was a guy I knew from Ohio State whom I probably hadn't seen in about seven or eight years. He was an Air Force major on his honeymoon. Wow.

John Buckingham

After OCS, Kathy and I were married on August 16, 1969, in her hometown, Oak Ridge, Tennessee. We met at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville where I graduated before entering the Army (in lieu of being drafted) and she graduated in three years shortly before we married. After the Supply Officer course at Ft. Lee, we bought a 1970/Pontiac Lemans that we didn't need and soon realized we couldn't afford. It was later replaced by a VW Bug. Anyway, we packed up our fancy car and drove to LA and spent Thanksgiving with my sister and her family in Fountain Valley.

We then drove up the coast to Ft. Ord where I was assigned to the Combat Developments Command Experimentation Command (one of the crazier units in the Army). We planned and coordinated experiments with equipment (such as the TOW Missile) and combat configurations (such as how many LOH's were optimal to support helicopter gun ships). We spent Christmas that year at our apartment in Pacific Grove, CA. We also soon learned that we couldn't afford that apartment (even with an off-post allowance) and took a wonderful two-bedroom NCO duplex on post since there was no married officer housing available then. It turned out to be perfect for us, and our budget flourished with our VW Bug and free housing. The view of Monterey Bay from Pacific Grove to Santa Cruz was also very nice.

After Ft. Ord, I spent 7 months in Da Nang with the 80th General Support Group (Rear Area Security Officer and then OIC of the Da Nang NCO Clubs. Notice how useful my BS in Business Administration (Marketing), Infantry Basic and AIT, Engineer OCS, and Supply Officer training were for my assignments at Ft. Ord and in Nam? Neither did I, but that seemed to me to be the Army way. One of the many reasons I decided to leave the Army and return to UT Law School.

William Clark

After graduating from OCS I went to the Ft Lee Supply School. I extended my term in order to go to the west coast and was stationed at Ft Ord CA. There I was a junior officer at an AIT company and a commanding officer of a truck driving company. The drivers drove every assignment from the generals to night training. Never had a serious issue, thank God. The eight ball was no cycle breaks. My brother was in Nam so I volunteered for a transfer. The Army sent me to Korea.

In Korea, I don't know what happen or how, but I was assigned to be the commanding officer of the PX depot in Inchon. Me with a degree in accounting, an Engineer officer, in charge of MP's. The Air Force was in charge of the depot. I was basically on my own unless there was a problem. I quickly figured out (with a lot of help from the Koreans, base employees and the troops) how best to command without inviting scrutiny. The next six months were the happiest in my life. Someday I will write a separate blog.

I made Captain in 26 months, not all for good reasons. The war was winding down and I applied for an early out. My last months were spent as a Human Relations officer in Korea which is also another story. Anybody ever hear of a Barry Goldwater Congressional? I have.

Gary Cochard

I was between assignments, between the MI Officer Basic Course at Ft Devens, Mass, and USASA PAC HQS, Hawaii (somebody had to do it). Spent Christmas at my parents' home in Auburn, Indiana. I arrived in Hawaii in early January, 1970. One year later, I was the duty officer on a Sunday afternoon at which time an attractive young female lieutenant signed into our

Headquarters. A year after that, she became my bride and we're still happily married to this day! I served 22 years and retired as a LTC, my wife served 30 years and retired as a COL. We have one son, a daughter-in-law and two granddaughters. Life is good!

Clyde Davis

After OCS, I was assigned to Supply School at Ft. Lee, Virginia. Our 1st son was born in the Ft. Lee Hospital on Nov. 7, 1969. Once Supply School was completed, we took leave and were at my parents' home in Greenville, SC for Christmas. After New Year's I reported to Fort Jackson, SC where I was assigned as Assistant Adjutant in the Personnel Center. After a year, I was assigned as Commander of Company C, US Army Reception Station at Fort Jackson. Our job was to prepare new arrivals for Basic Training with haircuts, uniforms, testing, physicals, etc. Fortunately, I had a great 1st Sergeant and an experienced Supply Sergeant so my job was primarily signing the morning report and making sure our COL. was happy. It was not exactly strenuous work compared to what some of you did, but somebody had to do it.

Jeff Ellis

I'm loving the great stories about those first assignments. I've always valued those experiences we had that our civilian mates who did not serve missed out on and have no frame of reference to understand what we were experiencing- some good, some challenging, but all character-building. (And we can all probably claim to being "characters" compared to those who didn't serve).

I, like David Jones, launched into being a TAC without having a good feel for what the heck I was doing; sort of a red tab on steroids for awhile.

That Christmas after we were commissioned was notable because our first son had been born on the Thanksgiving the month before. So trying to be a TAC and having a new baby in the apartment meant having absolutely no sleep for several weeks.

With our son having been born at the Belvoir post hospital on Thanksgiving Day that year, I had some fun with my candidates. Our son weighed 9 lbs, so the platoon dropped to give me 9 push-ups. They also got cigars and a break to enjoy them. It was way too easy an evening for them.

Since I was batching for the 3 days Carol Lynne was in the hospital, I got a couple of Thanksgiving dinners. I was too excited and accepted dinner with my company XO and his wife and also with the parents of our classmate, George Hesselbacher. I ate at one place and then scooted to the other for a second meal. George's dad was a colonel stationed in DC and his mom was a fairy godmother to us with a new baby that we had no idea what to do with. Love those military families and how they look out after one another. I'll never forget the Hesselbacher's kindnesses.

Sandy Emerson

After graduation, I went right into a Heavy Equipment Platoon Leader school at Ft. Belvoir (with 2 of my Univ. of Idaho fraternity bros who had gone through ROTC (another story). At Lt. Ware's advice I had also Vol Indef'd for a Post Engineer's MOS in Germany, but not just anywhere - southern Germany, where they make beer and ski in the Alps. We arrived in Augsburg, Germany just outside of Munich in October (during the 1st of 4 Octoberfests we made it to while assigned to Engineer District Sued Bayern. We also had concurrent travel as part of the vol indef agreement. The host officer who met us turned out to be none other than 22 Hotel 2

company grad, 2Lt Eric Moon - that's another story also. From arrival at Engr. Dist. HQ my / our 1st assignment was Facilities Engineer School for 6 weeks in Garmisch - Partenkirchen where we were in a new officers' quarters apartment. It was like pinch us, are we really here and is it this amazing? We (my wife Jeanne and new son Brian, 8 months old) spent that Christmas in Berchtesgaden at another AFRC (Armed Forces Rec Center) hotel (confiscated from the German Nazis at the end of the war). The Engineer District adjutant who became a great friend, took us there and introduced us to the Mayor, who worked for the Engineer District there (our district covered all the military bases and installations in Germany along the borders). The mountain town is one of the most beautiful there is, especially at Christmas. They have a big fir tree 3 stories tall in the center of town decorated with candles where the town gathers to sing Silent Night, Holy Night (Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht) after German and Austrian hunting clubs shoot a chorus of rounds from blunderbuss's from high in the mountains surrounding the Alpine village.

So that's how I spent the Christmas of 1969.

Chuck Engelberger

I was at Ft. Eustis with C Co, 714th Trans Bn (Railway Operating). Were Ed Svitil (HQ Co) and I the only classmates to be assigned to the same battalion for our initial assignment?

Dennis Gehley

I was the only Finance Corps commission in our graduation class. I went from commission at Ft. Belvoir on August 8 to wedding at Ft. Belvoir on August 16 to Finance School for 2 months after the wedding. By November, I was in Heidelberg, Germany, with my bride at my CO's house for Thanksgiving. It was the beginning of a fantastic two-year assignment. RVN after Heidelberg, not so fantastic.

Bill Hunter

I was Assistant Club Officer, Fort Myers Officer Club. As you all can imagine, it was a festive time! There was much going on!

David Jones

Still at Ft. Belvoir, still trying to figure out, and still nervous about, whether I really knew how to be a TAC. I think it would have been easier to go do something and come back than wake up one morning and just shift those gears. I was enjoying my new digs on post, in the BOQ rather than the barracks, and loving the 1967 gold Mustang I bought that, after attending the Barrett-Jackson classic car auction in Phoenix last year, I now realize I should have put up on blocks somewhere and hung onto.

James Karuzas

December 1969 Lt James Karuzas and wife drove cross country from Ft. Devens, MA to home in Colorado for skiing and Christmas with family. I was en route to Korea. I arrived in Seoul on New Years Eve to a USASA Group Korea command party where I was introduced to unit officers, and had a brief discussion of where new blood was needed and to what job I could be assigned. At this point, I had 14 months of Army training: Basic - Ft. Leonard Wood; Artillery AIT at Ft. Sill (MOS Land Surveyor which meant LRP and very short future if sent to VN); OCS

at Belvoir of course, where (I think) unimpressive field leadership performance landed me an MI commission. Didn't vol-indef. Lucked into ASA which meant more training (electronic warfare and cryptology) at Fort Devens. Back to New Years Eve. I was assigned to a remote, self contained company of 105 men on an island in the Yellow sea with a mountain-top operations site as Supply Officer. They would give me a one week logistics training in country for this job! With only a few officers in the company I was also Motor Pool Officer, Mess Officer, Utilities Officer (we had our own power generation, water system, etc), Training Officer and all the other 'Officer' duties I don't even remember which my low rank entitled me to do. Basically a good, interesting and safe 13 month assignment. No regrets.

Kit Kitson

Me too. Home with family in Pennsylvania departed for new assignment at Ft. McClellan in Anniston, Alabama on Jan 2, 1970 drove non-stop.

Wyland Leadbetter

My wife and I had just arrived at Fort Carson after OCS assigned to the 7th Engineer Battalion. A year later I went to Viet Nam.

Buck Lindsay

5th Corps Support Command (VCOSCOM), IG Farbin Building, (Ike's HQ after WW2), Frankfurt, Germany, working to maintain US troop facilities. With LTC Deason - old school, Patton'esque. Dressed me down once like a sick dog. And Sergeant Major Rhelya - floated between mean as a bob-cat and kind as a kitten. "With respect, LT, you don't know what the hell you're doing . . ." Basically an 8-5 office job, living on the economy. French girlfriend. Parle vous? Loved every minute of it. Buck

Bob Martin

Finished with supply course at FT. Lee, and assigned to a company at Ft. Lee with several of our OCS classmates. I was also reunited with several AIT classmates who attended artillery OCS at Ft. Sill, Oklahoma. My duty was a supply officer in what was basically a holding company until I got my Vietnam orders. Never quite understood why a rookie officer was in charge of supply sergeants who knew how to run the supply room. It's the Army way. Took leave for Christmas and was with my parents in Milwaukee. Back to Ft. Lee to be duty officer on New Years Eve and day.

Glenn McCarley

I was either a platoon leader or XO with B Co. 63rd Construction Engineering Bn at Ft. Hood. I spent Christmas Eve night as the battalion duty officer. It was not an especially enjoyable evening but someone had to do it and it was my turn on the duty roster. Christmas 2017 should be much more enjoyable. I am sure that all my classmates behaved during the year and Santa will be good to you. Merry Christmas to all.

Mike Melton

My assignment Christmas 1969 was at Hunter Army Airfield in Savannah, GA. I was the operations officer for a POL Company, responsible for fueling the flight line - Huey's and Cobras.

Ray Murray

We finished Supply School at Fort Lee in time to get home for the Holidays. I spent Christmas with my wife Holly and family at home in Stockbridge, MA (think Norman Rockwell). We headed to our two year stint in Germany on December 31st. My assignment was Depot Operations Officer and Platoon Leader in one of the Operating Company's at Nabollenbach Army Depot in Idar Oberstein, near Wiessbaden. We were short handed officers with everyone in Viet Nam. The Operations Officer was a Major's slot so it was a fast, steep learning curve. As the only OCS grad among a flock of ROTC guys, I wound up in charge of parades, ceremonies, etc. I was amazed at how little the ROTC folks knew. It was like teaching them Basic Training. I don't think many of them could have completed our OCS program. That assignment was the start of three memorable years as an Army Officer..... Maybe more later.

Jim Quimby

I am amazed all of you guys had assignments so quickly. I believe I was still in supply school at Fort Lee.

Larry Sanford

Christmas, 1969, I was assigned to the 265th Maintenance Battalion at Fort Riley Kansas. I was the S2, which wouldn't have been much of a job, but we had one company that maintained nuclear weapons and also an EOD detachment and they both required access to a lot of classified documents. I was also responsible for a secure communications truck (cryptography) that went with that job (mostly useful as a way of getting you in a lot of trouble). Additionally, I was the newly appointed Battalion Adjutant, and that was, for sure, a full time job. I became a very busy 2Lt. No time for golf.

Ed Svitil

HHC CDR, 714TH TBROS&DE. Had Christmas dinner with troops in mess hall - of course!

Jim Sweat

I also was at Ft Hood. Assigned to Company E (Float Bridge) 17th Engineer Bn....

Joe Tavares

I was stationed at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New York District at the Federal Building in downtown New York. I lived at the BOQ at Ft. Hamilton, NY right under the Verrazano Narrows Bridge. Drove a Yamaha 250 to and from work and also had a VW Beetle. Loved my work as project manager handling projects at Army and Air Force bases throughout New England, New York and New Jersey. In 1971, I reported to Tan Son Nhut, Saigon where I was assigned to MACV Construction Directorate. I was responsible for all airfields in South Vietnam and the Saigon District City Schools. Flew to the prisoner of war island, Phu Qua, to

check on airfield in preparation for Nixon's ceasefire which never happened. Attended all morning war briefings, wrote presentations for VIPs, and monthly updates for Joint Chiefs of Staff. I was now convinced that the war and its assessment and presentation to the President were bogus and wrong. Army senior cadre was really sick as was training and preparation. For these reasons, I could not stay in the Army and returned to work for a wonderful construction company in Westchester.

Mike West

As with others in 22-Hotel, I got married on August 16, 1969. Sandy and I traveled in a packed car to Massachusetts for a honeymoon, then to Ft. Devens, Mass. for Cryptologic Officers Basic course. It finished in early December, then we drove in another packed car to my home in Indiana for Christmas with my family and then to her family's home in east Tennessee where we spent Christmas day. Then we set out for California for our first duty station, Two Rock Ranch Station, an Army Security Agency field station north of San Francisco. Jim Proud and I were together at OCS, Officers Basic and then at Two Rock for a year and a half, until the station was closed in mid-1971 in one of the Army's periodic base closure processes. I had just enough time for a short tour so I ended up in Korea in a plain-clothes liaison job working with the ROK military and other US intelligence groups. Interesting work...

Steve Wing

XO (and a dozen other assignments) of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, U.S. Army Engineer Command, Europe. Frankfurt. My workplace was at Gibbs Kaserne, once a German Army facility, not at the Headquarters where officers wore greens, etc. On Christmas I was on leave in England, joining a college friend and his family at their home in Whitney, near Oxford.

Jim Wilson

Ammunition Officer - Directorate of Operations and Logistics - U S Army Infantry School - Ft. Benning, GA. Stationed in an old wooden building with a pot belly stove in the Harmony Church area. I was there for five months before departing for the Republic of Viet Nam.