A tribute to Johnson County area veterans who have served our country
May is National Military Appreciation Month

Congress designated May as National Military Appreciation Month in 1999 to ensure the nation was given the opportunity to publicly demonstrate its appreciation for the sacrifices and successes made by our servicemembers past and present.

May was selected because it has the most days set aside for celebrating and commemorating our military’s achievements. These days include Loyalty Day, which was established in 1921; Victory in Europe (VE) Day, commemorating the end of World War II in Europe on May 8, 1945; Armed Forces Day, created in 1949; Military Spouse Appreciation Day, established in 1984; and Memorial Day.

Memorial Day, the only federal holiday in May, is celebrated on the last Monday of the month. The day, dating from the Civil War era, traditionally has marked recognition of those who have died in service to the nation.

With Memorial Day coming up on Monday, the Daily Journal salutes all those who have served, or are currently serving, in our armed forces.

Thank you!
Orme trained young pilots

By Amy May
Staff writer

Thousands of young World War II pilots met Ed Orme when they trained to fly the Vought F-4U Corsair at Pensacola Naval Air Station in Florida. He was a Marine, but served under Navy orders at a Navy base for all of his military career.

The Corsair was a fighter plane that could be launched from an aircraft carrier or an airbase. The single-engine plane was light and fast and played an important role in the Pacific Theater. It was the most advanced fighter plane at that time.

Orme, who grew up on a farm in southern Marion County, spent most of his military service at the Pensacola base training pilots.

“They already knew how to fly. I instructed them on how to attack bombers, do overhead runs and deflections. I introduced that training and took them to the advanced stages of training,” the 93-year-old said. “I’d fly with them and grade their runs.”

Dive-bombing, strafing and dog-fighting were all part of the program. The pilots’ ammunition was color coded, so the instructors could tell who hit his targets. Competition was fierce among the young, gung-ho pilots to be the best, he said.

He worked with the cadets for six weeks. The pilots were appreciative of his training and would give him a big party before they left.

“They’d always try to get me drunk, but I would never do that. I would just have one drink,” he said.

SEE ORME, PAGE 31

Ed Orme
Age: 93
Birthplace/hometown: Indianapolis
Residence: Franklin
Years of service: 1942-1959
Branch of service: U.S. Marine Corps
Duties: Flight instructor
Rank attained: Major
Family: Wife, Joyce Orme; daughters, Sara Dyer, Sandy Taylor and Susan Russell; son, Eddie Orme (deceased)

Indiana Masonic Home at Compass Park

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Some gave all

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Rook nurtured broadcast skills

By Jenn Willhite
Correspondent

Franklin resident Dave Rook says enlisting in the United States military was always a dream he had as a young man. He made that dream a reality – twice.

In 1959, when he was 19 years old, Rook enlisted with the Air Force. The Medina, New York, native completed his basic training in San Antonio at Lackland Air Force Base and was initially deployed to Incirlik, Turkey.

It wasn't too long thereafter that he was transferred to Spangdahlem, Germany.

Rook's love for and talent with words and relating to the public served as the catalyst for his military occupational specialty as broadcast journalist and broadcasting in general.

“When you work on the local TV station, but on a small base, like in Turkey, you become very well-known,” the 76-year-old Rook says. “After I’d been there six months, I couldn’t go anywhere without people recognizing me. That’s not what I did it for, but that was a benefit I would say. I think it gave me a different perspective.”

What made each day typical for him was that it was nearly guaranteed it would be anything but typical. Rook recalls an extensive exercise that required soldiers with public relations skills. The Army specifically requested broadcast services at three
Dave Rook
Age: 76
Birthplace: Medina, New York
Residence: Franklin
Years of service: 1959 to 1964; 1971 to 1990
Branch: U.S. Air Force and U.S. Navy
Duties: Broadcast journalist /broadcasting
Rank: Master Chief
Family: Widowed. Daughters, BethAnn Bruce, Patricia Rose, Rebecca MacKenzie

separate bases in Honduras. He was asked to lead a deployment of one of the broadcast units. So he shipped out from California and soon arrived in Honduras.

“We installed and operated three different television stations and had a small detachment in the Republic of Panama,” Rook says. “Some of it was public relations, such as answering news inquiries.”

As is often the case with young people, the ripe age of 19 brings the illusion of a world of wisdom. But Rook says he quickly learned he didn’t know as much as he thought he did. Although he was never directly involved with any conflict situations, he says his military experience definitely changed not only who he was as a person at the time, but who he would become.

“I think it gave me a good work ethic,” Rook says. “And in most military situations you are shorthanded; you don’t ever have as many people as you are supposed to have, so you learn to make do with less.”

In 1964, Rook was honorably discharged and returned to civilian life. He went to work for the Mead Corp. in Dayton, Ohio. He and his new wife soon had three children and settled into family life. He decided to enlist in the reserves to keep his foot in the door with the military, he says.

Fewer than 10 years later Rook was laid off from his job at Mead and was forced to find an alternate means for supporting his family. So he decided to re-enlist for active duty. This time he became an officer in the Navy.

He says his previous experience in the Air Force helped pave the way for his re-enlistment in 1971. “An opportunity came up to enlist for 24 months,” he says. “I took it, and once I got in, I stayed.”

Rook says he recommends military service for anyone whose heart is in it. Not only did it give him a good work ethic, he says, but it offered him a chance to see parts of the world he never would have otherwise. But it is an experience that forces you to tuck away your ego while holding your head high.

“The first two years will be rough because you will be low on the totem pole,” he says. “But you are going to mature.”

Even for those who are currently serving and may be getting ready to be discharged, Rook recommends joining the reserves to stay involved. He says that route is what helped him and his family out of a difficult time.

“The best thing I ever did was go into the reserves,” he says. “It gave me the opportunity down the road, when I needed a job, to go back.”

But above all, Rook says, the military experience gives those who take part something that is priceless. “It’s all the teamwork and camaraderie with your fellow service members,” he says. “The closeness of the military community is invaluable, especially when you’re overseas.”

“In most military situations you are shorthanded; you don’t ever have as many people as you are supposed to have, so you learn to make do with less.”

— Dave Rook
Ex-commander modernized Camp Atterbury

By Amy May
Staff writer

Camp Atterbury Joint Maneuver Training Center is nationally known as a premier training site for all branches of the military that are bound for overseas deployment in the Global War on Terror. The camp was activated after Sept. 11, 2001, and millions of dollars have been invested in its infrastructure and training programs.

But when Col. Jorg Stachel, who served as the post commander from 1986 to 1992, took the reins, it was pretty neglected and out-of-date. It was just “Camp Atterbury” then and was used for weekend and two-week summer training for Indiana National Guard troops. He laid the groundwork for the modern facility seen today.

His association with the camp began in the mid-1970s, when he worked two temporary tours there before being employed as a procurement person at Stout Field in Indianapolis. In 1975, he took a job at Atterbury as a logistics officer. It was the first time since World War II that the camp filled that position. Logistics officers take care of supplies and transportation at a camp or military base.

Little had changed at Camp Atterbury since World War II, he said. It had old barracks and an antiquated mess hall; everything was poorly maintained, and buildings were heated with pot-bellied stoves.

“I was supposed to account for all those. I was responsible for every pot-bellied stove. I had to order food, fuel, ammunition for all the troops that came. Indiana National Guard came for annual training and during weekends. Also active-duties came to train. It was always busy,” he said.

In 1981, he went back to Stout Field and was promoted to lieutenant colonel and state procurement officer, which meant he did all the contracting and procurement for state Guard facilities and armories. He brokered an agreement between the state and the federal government to operate Camp Atterbury, which made federal reimbursement for construction and maintenance possible. Five years later, he was offered the post commander position.

“We were able to be really innovative in the way we did business,” he said. “I kind of started the process of modernizing the camp.”

He was able to get more soldiers, not just Indiana National Guard, to come to the camp for training, including establishing an exchange program with the British army and a short annual training stint for Navy SEALs. He got involved with a national council of military training sites. Members of the council worked to find a fair funding formula for the nation’s training facilities.

“The politically connected states got the most money. We came up with a way to be more equitable,” Stachel said.

He also worked with local communities on a variety of concerns, such as camp noise, timber resources and even fighting off a proposed landfill.

Atterbury Correctional Facility, a minimum security prison, was installed during Stachel’s tenure. He remembers the idea was not enthusiastically embraced by the neighboring communities, politicians or the ING internal command. It was federal property, and a prison there was unheard of, but he looked at it as a “National Guard test.”

“The plan from the beginning was that (prisoners) would work at Camp Atterbury and be low-risk offenders. It turned out OK, and it was good for the inmates, too,” he said.

Stachel also hired the camp’s first forester and environmental staff to take care of the wooded areas, which A tri-folded U.S. flag is displayed in Jorg Stachel’s Greenwood home. It was flown at Camp Ramadi, Al Anbar Province, Iraq, July 4, 2006. “The 501st Forward Support Battalion was in support of the 1st Armored Division over there. The commander thought I would appreciate this flag and had it presented to me by one of his homecoming officers,” Stachel said. He has another flag that was flown over the U.S. Capitol and presented to him upon his retirement by Sen. Richard Lugar’s office.
is most of the camp’s 33,000 acres. Many endangered, rare and threatened species live there, and the staff inventoried them, as well as dealing with mosquitoes that bred in the ruts on the tank tracks. Today, the camp is lauded as home to the federally endangered Indiana bat and efforts continue to save its habitat.

“I used to get dropped off and just walk the area. I’d use a compass and a map to get out,” he said.

He also started construction on the camp’s 3,200-foot airstrip, got many of the interior dirt roads paved and began improvements to the barracks and facilities.

In 1988, the Italian POW chapel was brought to Stachel’s attention. During World War II, some of what is now Atterbury Fish & Wildlife Area was a prisoner-of-war detention camp. The Italian prisoners built the small chapel there out of scrounged materials. It is the only component of the POW camp that is still standing.

He had noticed it driving around the area and had seen the beautiful but faded frescoes painted on the walls inside the small, open-sided building. “I thought it was a shame it wasn’t being maintained,” he said.

In addition to exposure to the elements, the chapel was frequently shot at and was littered with trash and beer cans. “I said we need to tear it down or fix it, and I hate to tear it down,” Stachel said.

So he got busy bringing people, money and resources together to get the chapel renovated. Today, the Italian Heritage Society of Indiana has an annual picnic and rededication at the chapel. It is regularly maintained and is a much-loved area historical site.

In 1990, Stachel created the Camp Atterbury Veterans Memorial Association. He wrote into the bylaws that the camp commander will serve as president of the organization, since that person would be in control of the money.

The first projects were the indoor and outdoor museums. The outdoor museum, which was dedicated in 1992 – Stachel’s final year as commander – includes a wall with insignia of the units that trained there, as well as a fundraising memorial brick garden and a reflecting pond. CAVMA hosts an annual ceremony, usually in August, to remember the veterans and honor them.

The indoor museum was originally inside the camp perimeter, but was recently moved across Hospital Road. Visitors can now access the

SEE STACHEL, PAGE 30

"I WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR EVERY POT-BELLIED STOVE. I HAD TO ORDER FOOD, FUEL, AMMUNITION FOR ALL THE TROOPS THAT CAME. INDIANA NATIONAL GUARD CAME FOR ANNUAL TRAINING AND DURING WEEKENDS."

— JORG STACHEL

MEMORIAL DAY
HONORING THOSE WHO SERVED.
Cronin joined young, grew up in the navy

By Jenn Willhite
Correspondent

If there is one thing guaranteed about military service, it offers life-changing lessons, says Bill Cronin. The Franklin resident says he joined the reserves with his parents’ consent when he was 17 years old and enlisted in the U.S. Navy when he was 17 years and three months old.

“You could join when you were still in high school, and then when you wanted to join the regular Navy, you quit school and went,” he says. “I wish I had not done that, but I did. I was a kid and thought I knew everything.”

Cronin says the first thought that crossed his mind was, “Why did I do this?” Initially, he underwent basic training in Great Lakes, Illinois, and after he joined the Navy he completed additional training in San Diego. He was resigned to making the best of his situation and says everything worked out pretty well in the end.

Fresh from boot camp and aboard ship, Cronin says he soon grew bored. While at port one evening, he called home and was talking about how he should have joined the Marines instead of the Navy because they weren't doing anything.

“My dad said, ‘Don’t say that too loud,’” Cronin says. “When I got back aboard ship, they told us we were leaving for Vietnam. Everyone aboard said, ‘Why don’t you keep your mouth shut, Cronin?’”

Most of his time was spent aboard ship. His main duties included transporting soldiers, he says. Taxi service is what he called it. Each trip would take the ship from Vietnam to Hawaii and back again.

“We used to tease the troops when we would
pull in on shore and say, ‘Did you guys call a taxi?’” he says. “You tried to make things as good as you could to make it easier.”

As the reality of war started sinking in, Cronin says he thought to himself, “I should be home chasing girls instead of ducking bullets.” When he arrived in Vietnam, he says, he wasn’t really prepared for it. Soon after the ship docked, the crew lost two soldiers.

“They told us we were in a safe zone, and the Army guards on the beach found two dead the next day,” he says. “So it wasn’t so safe after all.”

Like many of his generation who served in the Vietnam War, Cronin doesn’t talk about his war experiences too often, if at all, especially the time he spent ashore. But he readily admits everyone had to do his part. The ship on which he served had a crew of 158 men, including officers.

“You get close, but you do not want to get too close to the ones who are leaving or who you are transporting because some of them are not coming back,” he says.

One memorable thing that came out of his military service still puts a smile on his face. His engineering officer helped him build his first motorcycle.

“We managed to build a three-wheeler aboard ship,” he says. “We were hiding parts here and there and everywhere.” The then-20-year-old and the officer took the bike off the ship piece by piece and reassembled it on the beach in San Diego.

While he was aboard ship, one of Cronin’s other responsibilities was to tend the boilers, he says. It seemed like tending the boilers was a metaphor for the young soldier’s bubbling frustrations.

He returned to civilian life in 1967. In the decades since his discharge, he has devoted his free time to thinking about, designing and finally building a POW/MIA-themed motorcycle that is truly a labor of love, he says.

“The only thing I can say is I got the talent I have from the Lord, and I’m using it,” he says. “Otherwise I couldn’t have built anything. You do not waste it; you want to use your talent.”

Longtime friend Marcia Aikman says Cronin serves as an example to others in service.

“He is a very stand-up guy, and there is no gray area with him,” she says. “He is a very giving person, but he is cautious about who he trusts. I feel very fortunate that he trusts me, and that means a lot to me.”

Cronin offers one piece of advice to young people today, especially those who are enlisting in the military, that is profound in its simplicity.

“I would tell them to do their best, pay attention and to not be afraid,” he says. “Be honest and true to yourself. That’s the way my dad tried to teach me, and I didn’t listen to what he said. But the older I got, the smarter he got.”

The Johnson County Republican Central Committee along with our Town, City and County office holders remember and thank our soldiers, past and present, for their dedicated service to our Country and State on Memorial Day.
By Amy May
Staff writer

From Iraq and Afghanistan to Butlerville, Indiana, Lt. Col. John Pitt’s military career has been long and varied. He joined the Indiana National Guard with a friend in 1990. He was living in Valparaiso and attending Purdue North Central.

“I wanted to use the GI Bill so I could go to IU,” he said.

He never planned on staying in for almost 30 years. The Guard turned out to be his career, although he did go to Indiana University, graduating in 1994 with a bachelor’s degree in business management. Instead of embarking on a business path, Pitt continued in the military and attended Officer Candidate School in 1996-97.

The military has afforded him many opportunities to see other countries. He’s been to Panama, Germany, Slovakia, Hungary and Italy, where he met his wife, Simone. And he’s served in Iraq and Afghanistan as part of the Global War on Terror.

He also attended Army Ranger School. The elite, smaller-unit tactics school is the Army’s premier training program. Only 1 to 2 percent of soldiers are Ranger qualified, Pitt said. He was the first non-infantry soldier to go there, which he did with the help of his mentor and the “biggest influencer” of his military career, Maj. Gen. Will Roy. He is also Army airborne qualified, which means he’s had “jump school” and air assault training.

His assigned unit is the 113th Engineer Battalion, where he is the commander.

An engineering unit is the most varied and versatile of Guard units, he said. There are 21 different jobs in the 113th, ranging from plumbers and electricians to heavy equipment operators and land surveyors. Most of the jobs are similar to those seen at a civilian construction site, but others are combat specific, he said.

For example, some soldiers specialize in route clearance, looking for and safely removing improvised explosive devices from roads. IEDs were the cause of many soldier casualties in Iraq and Afghanistan. Engineers might be called upon to blow up the side of Muscatatuck leader has served from Indiana to world hot spots and back again

Lt. Col. John Pitt of the Indiana National Guard is the commander of Muscatatuck Urban Training Center and the commander of the 113th Engineer Battalion. Photos by Amy May

“OUR MISSION (IN IRAQ) WAS TO STAY ALERT, COMMUNICATE, SMILE AND WAVE. WE’RE GUESTS IN THEIR COUNTRY. BE FRIENDLY BUT BE PREPARED FOR THREATS. IT WAS TENSE, BUT IT WAS SURVIVABLE.”

— JOHN PITT
The mission was dangerous. Although Hussein had just been captured, his sympathizers were still in the area, shooting and throwing grenades at the Americans. Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, an Osama bin Laden compatriot and the founder of ISIS or Daesh, was recruiting foreign fighters, as well. He was killed in a targeted bombing when Pitt was in Iraq.

Pitt said he prefers the term “Daesh” for the terror group. Calling it “Islamic State” implies it has a legitimate religious mission, which it does not, he said.

“We knew there were threats, bombs and bad people over there,” he said. “Our mission was to stay alert, communicate, smile and wave. We’re guests in their country. Be friendly but be prepared for threats. It was tense, but it was survivable.”

In fact, all members of his unit survived. There were 419 soldiers, and 39 of them received Purple Hearts. The soldiers were out in dangerous situations every day, building things and interacting with the locals, which makes this statistic even more impressive, Pitt said.

“To bring everyone home alive is a direct testament to Col. (Richard) Shatto,” he said.

After Iraq, Pitt returned to Gary to work as a recruiter, attended a one-year resident training course in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, and finally came to Atterbury-Muscatatuck Center for Complex Operations for 2½ years.

In 2010, Pitt was sent to Paktia, Afghanistan, as part of a 16-man team to work with the 203rd Corps, Afghan National Army. He met Gen. Abdul Khaliq, who was known as the best corps commander in the ANA.

“Our job was to build Afghan capability capacity. It was a challenge because our partner was Afghan,” he said.

The overall goal of the mission in Afghanistan was to help the country become militarily self-sufficient in order to protect itself from the Taliban and other terror networks.

“As an engineer, you could see it when we got there. They had no route clearance capability. There was no NCO academy; no way to build their mid-level leaders. They needed a base in the mountains to stop the flow of equipment.”

One of Pitt’s best moments there was seeing how the 203rd cleared the roads so they could all go commission a new ANA base.

“We set conditions so they could secure their own land. 2010 was probably the most fulfilling mission I had,” he said.

He more recently served as the manager of the Johnson County Armory in Franklin and was then offered the post of commander of Muscatatuck Urban Training Center. MUTC is located in Butlerville on a former hospital campus that housed developmentally disabled people. The center offers a realistic and holistic city environment for troops to train.
Wayne Murray stood out from others at an early age. In fact, he graduated from high school in 1964, ahead of his classmates, but returned to join them for the official ceremony. When drafted by the U.S. military in 1965, he chose to join the Navy but felt somewhat unchallenged by the “boot camp” training he received.

“When I went to my first duty station, the chief petty officer told me the Navy had started a special forces group and asked if I would be interested in joining,” he recalls. “I asked what it was all about, but he said he really couldn’t tell me. So I volunteered anyway.”

When he was sent to Coronado Sound in California for initial SEAL training, Murray still had no idea what SEAL meant.

“When we arrived, Marines were guarding the base, and as we were walking, we noticed all the windows were painted,” he said. “We came to a door that said ‘Navy Special Forces’ on it, and once inside, three tough-looking guys said they were going to make us SEALs, but they also said, ‘Most guys can’t handle it.’

“They then said, ‘We’re going to teach you things most people think aren’t possible.’ They also told us that from that point on, we were to run every place we had to go and were never to walk.”

As indicated during that initial meeting, Murray quickly learned that most “recruits” weren’t able to handle the rigorous SEAL training. “There were 63 in the class when we started, but only 21 made it. Others were kicked out or quit,” he recalls.

“Quitting was the worst thing you could possibly do. When you did that, you had to get down on your hands and knees, crawl to a bell, ring it and tell the rest of the guys that you were quitting. It was very degrading.”

However, during that 18-week process, Murray connected with one individual, in particular. “Smitty was from Nebraska, and we became close friends,” he said.

Upon completing their SEAL training, Murray and Smitty received their orders and flew to Saigon.

“That was a wild experience,” Murray said. “The temperature was 115, and there were bodies stacked everywhere. It smelt.

“We went to Camp Alpha briefly, then got on helicopters. It was my first time to fly, but that was also the first time I had ever seen a doobie, or marijuana. They called it ‘reefer’ there, and guys in the ‘copter were passing it around to each other.”

According to Murray, when his helicopter reached its destination, the foliage below was so thick that he and the other seven who would be accompanying him had to rappel down onto rice paddies as the
two helicopters that were carrying them hovered above.

“Guys met us below and took us to what would be our camp,” he said. “Our stuff was so secretive that nobody knew who we were or where we were at. There weren’t any officers with us either. The highest rank at our camp was an E7.”

Additionally, he quickly learned that his “camp” would be far different than what he had anticipated. “They took us to a hole in the ground, about 3 feet deep, maybe 4 feet long and about 4 feet wide,” he said. “That’s where we slept. We didn’t have barracks.”

From that point on, Murray was grateful for the specialized training he had received. “We were in the jungle with no electricity, no water, no food or anything,” he said. “Whenever we wanted to eat, we had to go out and kill a small animal. We were lucky because one of the guys on our team had been a butcher before he was drafted.”

However, June 8, 1968, things took a significantly worse turn for Murray.

“We were assigned to wipe out a radio tower that had been reporting locations to the enemy, but during our mission, Smitty was killed and things changed dramatically for me at that point. He was my only family, and when I got back to the bush, my attitude had changed. I was hateful and vengeful. Today, I can’t even describe to my wife how I felt when I lost Smitty.”

Murray also endured life-changing injuries before leaving Vietnam and the military in 1969. “An RPG blew up in my face, and shrapnel went partially into my brain,” he said. “Doctors said they got it all out, but there was damage they couldn’t do anything about. I have a very bad memory now. I lose track of stuff, and I can’t remember things like birthdays.

“I take 32 pills a day and still have a lot of pain, nightmares and flashbacks. I’m listed as 100 percent disabled, and I felt bad about being forced to retire, but people tell me I deserve it.”

In addition, Murray continues to struggle over the loss of Smitty. “I don’t have hardly any friends,” he said. “Guys have said they’ll be my best friend, but I have to stop and tell them they can be a good friend, but they can never be my best friend.”

Since returning to civilian life, Murray has been married three times. His first marriage ended in divorce, and his second wife died from cancer after they had been together for 35 years. He met his current wife through eHarmony, thanks to a hands-on approach taken by his children.

Prior to officially retiring, Murray worked at Jenn-Air for more than 20 years before his military-related complications became too severe. “Being a SEAL taught me to be very independent and self-reliant. It also taught me loyalty and devotion,” he said. “I learned that you never tell a lie and you don’t steal. I taught those things to my children.

“My war is over now. My wife knows me and takes care of me. She knows what I need.”

Submitted photo

“OUR STUFF WAS SO SECRETIVE THAT NOBODY KNEW WHO WE WERE OR WHERE WE WERE AT.”

— WAYNE MURRAY

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Wilcox followed grandfather’s advice

By Greg Seiter
Correspondent

Bri an Wilcox didn’t have full appreciation for his late grandfather’s military-related accomplishments until after he had joined the U.S. Army himself in 1996, but the Greenwood resident acknowledges that his grandfather, Howard “Howdy” Samuel Wilcox, played a major role in helping him decide to serve his country.

“I knew my grandfather was in the military, but I really didn’t know a lot about it. That wasn’t the focus when I was growing up,” Wilcox said. “But when I was in high school, I had a meeting with my grandfather at Meridian Hills Country Club, and he encouraged me. He wanted me to go into artillery. That was my final push to join.

“I just didn’t realize the significance of some of what he had done until I was already in. He retired in 1979 as a major general.”

Undoubtedly, military service time by other family members also helped encourage Wilcox to join. Aside from having both a father and stepfather serve in the U.S. Navy, Wilcox even had a former brother-in-law in the National Guard.

However, the Wilcox family was more publicly known for its contributions to racing as opposed to military service at that time.

In fact, Wilcox’s great-grandfather, Howdy Wilcox, was a professional race car driver who competed in the first 11 Indy 500s and won the race in 1919.

In addition, the younger Howdy Wilcox, Brian Wilcox’s Army-veteran grandfather, founded the Little 500 bicycle race at Indiana University as a tribute to his Indy 500 champion father, who died in 1923 during a crash at Altoona Speedway in Tyrone, Pennsylvania, when his son was only 3 years old.

With all of that history in mind, Brian Wilcox completed his basic training for the U.S. Army while at Fort Sill in Oklahoma in October 1996. He also received advanced individual training there and was given the opportunity to choose his own military occupational specialty and station.

“Field Surveyor School lasted 10 weeks, but I graduated first in my class with distinguished honors.”

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"THE MILITARY TAUGHT ME TIME MANAGEMENT, PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY, PERSEVERANCE, DEPENDABILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY. IF ANYTHING, I GUESS I WOULD ENCOURAGE OTHERS TO STAY PHYSICALLY FIT WHEN THEY LEAVE THE MILITARY."

— BRIAN WILCOX
Wilcox said. “While there, I learned how to maintain survey equipment and was accountable for that equipment.”

Wilcox was also given the opportunity to attend a second school, one that lasted 20 weeks and ultimately enabled him to become a network switching systems operator.

Throughout his military career, Wilcox had assignments at Fort Sill, Fort Campbell, Kentucky, and Fort Gordon, Georgia, but because he was serving during peaceful times, he also volunteered his services to local communities and strived to help others as often as he could.

From working with the Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers Program to assisting with community work in Clarksville, Tennessee, Wilcox made it a point to get involved in volunteer opportunities no matter where he was stationed.

“When I was in Kentucky, I volunteered a lot for the YMCA, and while in Georgia, I did a lot with emergency management and the American Red Cross,” he said. “I was much more focused on that sort of thing than trying to push for rank.”

The desire to help others blossomed early in Wilcox. “When I was in high school, I was a newspaper carrier, and I knew a lot of people there,” he recalls. “I’ve just always enjoyed helping people.”

Wilcox kept himself busy after leaving the military in 2001. In fact, he earned an associate degree in science and business administration from Ivy Tech in 2005 and a Bachelor of Science degree from Purdue University’s School of Engineering and Technology as well as a certificate in human resource management from Purdue while attending IUPUI in 2008.

“It took me some time to adjust when I first got out of the Army,” he said. “There’s an adjustment for any soldier to civilian life. I guess the biggest adjustment for me had to do with the physical training aspect. When you’re in, you’re at your peak and focused.

“The military taught me time management, personal responsibility, perseverance, dependability and accountability,” he said. “If anything, I guess I would encourage others to stay physically fit when they leave the military.”

Today, Wilcox works as an emergency road service technician for AAA Hoosier Motor Club in Indianapolis.

“I’m in the training side, and I want to stay in the field as long as I can,” he said. “I enjoy being out in the field, teaching and training. I just enjoy helping people.”

However, even today, Wilcox thinks about his grandfather from time to time.

“I’m really proud of my grandfather and the numerous awards he received,” Wilcox said. “He got two or three of the highest awards, including the Purple Heart, and I believe he was one of the youngest majors. He represented Indiana well.”

Sadly, Howdy Wilcox died in 2002. “He had a stroke in 2000 and never fully recovered,” Wilcox said. “It was hard for me. I didn’t get to spend a lot of time with him when I got out. He was very ill. I would have loved to have shared stories with him. “I just really didn’t get to close that chapter of my life.”

“HE (GRANDFATHER) WANTED ME TO GO INTO ARTILLERY. THAT WAS MY FINAL PUSH TO JOIN.”

— BRIAN WILCOX

As we continue on our mission to honor all of the men and women who have served and sacrificed for the freedoms we all hold so dear, we are pleased to announce the next addition to Proctor Memorial Park located at 499 Tracy Road in New Whiteland. We are currently raising funds to add a memorial to the WWII Veterans also known as “the greatest generation”. We have an artist rendering of the limestone piece that will be carved to show a silhouette of the USS Indianapolis in our effort to pay tribute to the Veterans of that conflict. In 2012 we added the Hoosier Heroes Wall which lists the names of every Indiana soldier killed while serving during World War II. In 2014 we added the Vietnam Veterans Memorial which lists the names of every Indiana soldier killed while serving during the Vietnam War. We hope to complete and install the WWII Memorial in 2017. If you would like to make a tax deductible donation to help us in this endeavor and to honor these heroes and their memories you may do so at the New Whiteland Town Hall, 540 Tracy Road Suite A, New Whiteland, IN 46184. For more information please call 317-535-7500 or visit our website at www.newwhiteland.in.gov. You may also visit our booth at National Night Out / Family Fun Day August 5, 2017 in our East Park.
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Whitlock took what military taught him and made a career

By Kami Ervin
Correspondent

Larry Whitlock’s military service began as a trip to the recruiter at the age of 17 and ended with the start of a 50-year love story that led him to Edinburgh to raise his family, enjoy his career and give more than half his lifetime to volunteerism and political service in the community.

Whitlock, of Connersville, had finished his junior year of high school and accompanied a buddy, who was joining the Marines, to the recruiter’s office. Whitlock opted for the Air Force instead. With his experience working at a local pharmacy in high school and having passed his pharmacist apprentice test, he was assured by the recruiter that he could be a medic or work in the pharmacy. Unfortunately, that didn’t end up being the case.

“They told me that they needed me in electronics, and I said, ‘I’m not interested,’” Whitlock said. “But that’s where I went: fire control – radar/missile control.”

After basic training he spent a year in Colorado and then moved to the Youngstown Air Force Base. There, he worked on the F-102 Jet Interceptors, planes flown by the 86th Fighter-Interceptor-Squadron, as radar control crew chief for the 79th. He spent six months in Pittsburgh and San Antonio, where he worked with the Air Guard updating planes being reconned from active service to the guard.

It was April 27, 1961, his first night in Pittsburgh, that Whitlock met his future wife, and he remembers it like it was yesterday. He and a friend attended a dance being hosted by some nurses at a local hospital, and it was there that he spotted Kay Greenberg, a student at St. Joseph’s Nursing School.

“I just kept staring at her across the room, and finally my buddy convinced me to ask her to dance,” Whitlock said. “She was so impressed with me that she introduced me as ‘Lou’ when I went to pick her up for dinner two weeks later.” They were married exactly nine months later in Cumberland, Maryland. “Mom and Dad seemed to be a perfect match,” son Dane Whitlock said. “They were a great example to others with respect to commitment, relationships and working together to raise a family.”

After Whitlock finished with the Air Force, the couple settled back in Indiana. The GI Bill had come through, so while he attended Butler University for the next three years, he also worked full time at Marion County Children’s Guardian Home and obtained his commercial pilot and instructor’s license to work as a contractor at local airports.

Somehow, the couple managed to make their busy schedules work. After Whitlock’s busy day, he stayed home at night while Kay worked as a nurse. It was about that time that Kay spotted an ad in the paper for AT&T

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**Larry Whitlock**

**Age:** 78

**Residence:** Edinburgh

**Years of Service:** Six

**Branch:** Air Force and Air Guard

**Assigned Unit:** 79th Consolidated Aircraft Maintenance Squadron

**Duties:** Airborne Fire Control/Radar Control

**Rank:** Airman 1st Class

**Family:** Wife, Kay (deceased); sons, Dean and Dane; daughters, Tracy and Kimberly; six grandchildren

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and convinced Whitlock to take the test. With his electronics experience from the Air Force, and after passing a series of tests, he was hired in 1966 and spent most of the next 30 years working in the toll department for AT&T before retiring.

“Being in the Air Force channeled me to a field I had no interest in. But later to a career I loved, a way to feed my family, and retirement,” he said. Whitlock was transferred to Columbus in 1969 not long after their youngest daughter was born, and he chose Edinburgh as a place to plant his roots. Both of his parents had grown up there. Over the next several years, the Whitlocks worked hard, bringing their kids up in the small town, keeping them involved and volunteering together as a family. One of these family projects included the preparation and delivery of turkey dinners to seniors and needy families in Edinburgh.

“When I was on town council, someone asked me if I wanted to buy a turkey because she wanted to make Thanksgiving dinner for some seniors on the south side of town,” Whitlock explained. “The first year, my daughter’s confirmation class helped, and then it got bigger every year.”

Eventually, Whitlock brought the ever-growing project to the American Legion, with the Edinburgh Fire Department joining in the mid-’90s to help deliver meals.

“Dad, through his actions, taught his children that we have a role in our community where we live,” Dane said. “To be part of our communities, we

SEE WHITLOCK, PAGE 29

Whitlock and his wife, Kay, who passed away in 2012. Submitted photo

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Ramey experienced difficult conditions in Korea

By Bob Bromley
Correspondent

When Elmer Ramey boarded a ship heading to Korea in June 1953, he was beginning and continuing a tradition of military service in his family. Ramey would be the first of five brothers who served in the military. In addition, he had an uncle who had been wounded in World War II. Later, a brother-in-law would be wounded twice while serving as a Marine in Vietnam.

Ramey registered for the draft when he turned 18, but wasn’t called to serve until he was 20. He headed off for the Korean War, but saw his fortunes change dramatically when the war ended in July 1953, while he was still on his way there.

Although there was no longer active fighting, Ramey arrived in a land ravaged by war and fraught with tension and danger. Stationed in Seoul, South Korea, Ramey drove a truck filled with barrels of oil to keep troops warm in the demilitarized zone.

The DMZ, also commonly referred to as the 38th parallel, is a strip of land that divides North Korea from South Korea. It incorporates territory on both sides of the cease-fire line as it existed at the end of the Korean War, according to an article on www.history.com. It was created by pulling back the respective forces 1.2 miles along each side of the line. It runs for about 150 miles across the peninsula. Then and continuing to this day, the areas north and south of the DMZ are heavily fortified, and both sides maintain a large contingent of troops there.

Ramey would make the approximately 35-mile trek from Seoul to the DMZ daily, supplying the troops with the fuel needed to keep them warm during what could be brutally cold winter days. Ramey, like the soldiers he supplied, lived in a tent during his time there.

The tents, and the stoves used to heat them, looked very similar to what you saw on “MASH,” Ramey said, referring to the iconic television show about the Korean War.

The dirt roads were dangerous, in many cases cut out of the side of a mountain, Ramey recalls. In the winter months, they would become snow-covered and icy. He was required to wear his helmet at all times.

Ramey remembers a stark land with extreme poverty. “The villages did not have anything. The mountains — there wasn’t much to them,” he said. “There was really nothing there at that time that you would want to go back for.”

With the exception of his time in the service, Ramey, 84, has lived in this area his entire life. Raised in Whiteland and Nineveh, he attended schools in Whiteland, Trafalgar and Edinburgh, before graduating from

Elmer Ramey
Age: 84
Residence: Nineveh
Years of Service: 1953-1954
Branch of Service: U.S. Army
Assigned Unit: 5th Armored Division – Artillery
Duties: Fuel truck driver
Rank: Private
Family: Wife, Mary Jane (died in 2009 after 54 years of marriage); daughters, Barbara and Lynn; son, Bill; five grandchildren; two great-grandchildren

SEE RAMEY, PAGE 29
Protecting ‘true freedom’

By Jenn Willhite
Correspondent

In 1991, Nineveh resident Bob Pyatskowit made his childhood dream come true. Since he was young, the Wisconsin native had dreamed of becoming an Army Ranger. Both his grandfathers served in the Army during World War II, and Pyatskowit felt it was his duty to protect his family and his country by serving as his grandfathers had.

The U.S. Army veteran says his military career, which spanned 20 years, is something he wouldn’t change for anything. When he first enlisted, Pyatskowit says his main objective was to get into the Army Rangers. “It’s a good place to start,” he says. “It’s being one of the best, and the experience is also a stepping stone if I wanted to go into special operations.”

It just so happened that once his training was completed in July, he and his fellow Rangers were sent to Somalia in October 1993 for what turned out to be a three-month mission.

The Battle of Mogadishu, also known as Day of the Rangers, was a raid intended to apprehend Mohamed Farrah Aidid and his band of soldiers, but it didn’t go as planned. Nearly two dozen Americans lost their lives, and more than 70 were wounded. Americans weren’t the only casualties; hundreds of Somalis also died.

The then 20-year-old Pyatskowit was a Humvee driver for the ground force for Task Force Ranger, he says. “My Ranger company was attached to the special operations troop that was there,” he says. “We were in charge...”
Sometimes Kevin Service can still hear the alarms. The frantic scurry of his soldiers’ boots. The rat-tat-tat of Victory Base’s mounted, automatic machine guns that spray into the sky at invisible missiles headed their way.

Usually, the sounds come to him as nightmares, waking him with a shock that propels him out of and under his bed. Then, reality sets in.

He is home. In the safety of his Edinburgh bedroom. Half a world away from the calculated chaos that marked a one-year tour of duty that would test his and his soldiers’ resolve so often in the barren Iraqi desert.

Service, who turns 60 this month, also has a lot of good memories of his 37 years in the Indiana National Guard. After all, he achieved the rank of master sergeant and got to work with scores of dedicated soldiers. It simultaneously paved the way for a fulfilling career in law enforcement as an Edinburgh police officer. It gave him a sense of purpose and fulfillment that wasn’t always easy but was always rewarding.

In the end, it was that deep fulfillment that made retiring from the National Guard on Jan. 1, 2015, such a hard choice. But it was the only choice. The physical and mental costs of post traumatic stress disorder were too great. Its roots go back to Iraq.

As a high-ranking manager in charge of personnel, Service was on top of all the comings and goings of Victory Base Complex, which was composed of 27 perimeter miles around the international airport of Baghdad. He was in charge of gate security, making sure the people who came in were on the up and up, and led security details for generals, entertainers and the peace-making visits of Vice President Joe Biden.

And those were just some of his responsibilities. He also was in charge of on-base death investigations, which more times than not would turn out to be from soldiers’ suicides that were as heartbreaking as they were tragic.

Service would find the soldiers in their quarters, typically having shot themselves with their Army-issued firearm. Victory Base had three to four suicides a week.

“Commanders would say they couldn’t find one of their soldiers,” Service said. “We knew they couldn’t be far. People just don’t go walking off of a military base, because if they did they’d be missing forever.”

Service said some of the suicidal soldiers had become depressed by being away from family and friends. They wanted to be home but were afraid to say anything for fear of appearing weak in front of their peers.

There were other reasons, too, one as tragic as the next. But sometimes an on-base death would need no investigation.

Service recalled one instance when a bomb dropped directly into the quarters of a soldier who was sleeping in his bed. Walled in concrete, the room was great protection against the dangerous world outside. But if something ever got inside, the concrete turned into a death trap for anyone unfortunate enough to be there.

The image bothers Service to this day. Here was a young man who, though he lived in constant danger, felt secure enough in his quarters to spread out his personal things, display family pictures and fall asleep. But fate was cruel.

“What it shows me is the fact that you’re always on duty and you know you’re not safe no matter where you are,” he said. “But you know what? He felt safe. And then to take a round right there in your sleep? It’s heartbreaking.”

So much death surrounded Service. To a certain extent, he got used to it. But he never could shake the effects of knowing just how young these victims were. Young like his sons, but cut down in the prime of their lives.

One son, Jason, now 37, was probably on a trajectory to committing suicide, Service said. The young man spent 18 months in Iraq on
“Our training was so intense and realistic that the only difference was on the missions, our casualties were real.”

— Bob Pyatskowit

Pyatskowit
FROM PAGE 21

of security as kind of like a reaction force.”

Looking back, he doesn’t really have too much to say about his experience in Somalia. It was just his job, he says. A job that didn’t differ much from the intense training he and his fellow soldiers underwent before going overseas.

“Our training was so intense and realistic that the only difference was on the missions, our casualties were real,” he says.

Pyatskowit says the camaraderie he had with his fellow soldiers who had also experienced combat stands out above everything else. He says the time he spent in Afghanistan, from 2004 to 2005, was a completely different world from his time in Somalia.

“The entire time I was in Afghanistan, I never pulled my weapon,” he says.

For the first five months, he served as a squad leader for the quick reaction force at Camp Phoenix in Kabul, where he and one other American soldier trained 120 Afghan soldiers in planning, sustainment and logistics. “They would get missions,” the 45-year-old says. “They would guard munitions and equipment that had been turned in by local warlords.”

The father of three says everyone’s military experience is different. “I think what made me grow up quick is it makes you appreciate the small things in life,” he says. “A lot of people here take things for granted.”

During his last couple of years in the National Guard, Pyatskowit’s job was to train new soldiers coming into the guard, he says. He didn’t pull any punches when it came to telling them what to expect.

Pyatskowit has a special fondness for quotes and words of wisdom. He says one that stands out is an apt quote for someone with military experience: “True freedom is something that the protected will never know.”

Those who made the biggest impact on Pyatskowit were his noncommissioned officers. “One was killed in Somalia,” he says. “The other one is a sergeant major over a second army in Korea right now.”

Despite his varied experiences, he says his time in the military has inspired a change in him that craves quiet.

“I like the peace and tranquility of being out in the country,” he says. “I can go out and sit in a deer stand or a duck blind and just sit there listening to nature wake up every morning. I’ve seen many sunrises and sunsets in many countries from the mountains to jungles, and each is cool in its own way.”

For those considering joining the military, Pyatskowit cautions that it is not for everyone. He says it isn’t a matter of if, but when, you will get deployed. And that you must take care of yourself and your buddies on your left and right.

He said if one of his three children would express interest in joining the military he wouldn’t dissuade them. He would remind them it is their decision and to not commit to it just because he did.

“You always hope that by the time your kids are older, there will be no need for armies or war,” he says. “But the reality is it is going to be there.”

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Duty gave Williams a greater appreciation for America

By Jenn Willhite
Correspondent

When Phil Williams was barely 20 years old he knew he would be drafted. As the Vietnam War raged on, the draft was being reinstituted. Williams felt if he was going to go to war, it would be on his own terms.

“There was a Naval Reserve in Anderson, near Muncie, and they had a slot open,” he says. “So I enlisted. I was glad I got into the Navy instead of having to go into the Army,” the 67-year-old says. “I ended up being stationed on a supply ship as a storekeeper.”

But the USS Niagara Falls supply ship was not so much a combat stores ship as it was more like a warehouse, he says. It would make routine trips from Da Nang, Vietnam, down the coast and across to the Philippines to resupply. The ship would go to port every two weeks, he says.

Although he did not see much combat, Williams doesn’t talk about what little time he did spend on land.

“I do not know that any of it was enjoyable, but you got to see a lot of different places, so that was a plus,” he says. “It is an experience that brings you very close when you work that closely with one another. When things go well, it is a good group.”

Located in the hull of the ship, the supply area was divided into five hulls that were each four levels deep. Everything one could think of was stored in that warehouse, he says, from aircraft parts to clothing and food.

No day was the same, he says. As he got accustomed to the rocking and rolling of the ship, Williams says a work day normally began about 7 a.m. and would end sometime around 11 p.m.

“Each ship that we had on a particular day had sent an order;” the Muncie native says. “It was a lot of work.”

Gathering supplies was just a small piece of the process it took to deliver all needed supplies. Everything was staged on pallets, which would be transferred via cargo nets. Once all deliveries were made, it was time to return to the Philippines to do it all again.

Williams returned to the United States in 1976. He says he didn’t have a problem readjusting and returned to school with the help of the GI Bill.

After receiving a degree in computer science, he worked in the data processing industry for Daniels Associates in Indianapolis until he retired in 2015.

He says he has remained involved with the Honor Guard and American Legion Post 205 in Franklin.

If given the opportunity, Williams says, he would not change a thing. He admits his time aboard the USS Niagara Falls was not the best duty for a storekeeper, but it was the best duty for the opportunity to see a lot of different places.

“I would hope that maybe the experience made me more responsible and aware of what I have and what we have as a nation,” he says. “Seeing poverty conditions in other countries; it is hard to...”
Several local celebrations and observances are planned for Memorial Day weekend this year.

Here’s what’s coming up:

**MAY 27:**

The **Whiteland VFW**’s 12th annual biscuits and gravy breakfast.
The fundraiser supports the Johnson County community van, which assists veterans with local transportation needs.
Donations of $3 to $5 for the breakfast will go to the van fund.
The breakfast will be served 7:30 to 10:30 a.m. at the New Whiteland VFW post, 215 U.S. 31, Whiteland.
World War II veterans are welcome to eat free.
The **Greenwood & Whiteland Veterans Of Foreign Wars** and the **Greenwood American Legion posts** will jointly sponsor their annual Memorial Day service programs at each of the Greenwood cemeteries.
The Greenwood and Whiteland honor guard and the Ladies Auxiliaries of each post will present the ceremony. The invocation, the setting of the wreath, rifle volley and Taps will be conducted in each of the five local cemeteries at the flagpole area.
The community is invited to take part in honoring all local military veterans.
Services will begin at 9 a.m. at Rock Lane Cemetery followed at 9:30 by Greenwood Cemetery, 10 at Mount Pleasant Cemetery, 10:30 Olive Branch Memorial Garden and 11 at Forest Lawn Cemetery.
For more information, call Bob Tuttle, at 317-888-5617 or email him at phylandbob@aol.com.
Franklin American Legion is asking for the community’s help to prepare Greenlawn Cemetery for Memorial Day.
Volunteers are needed at the cemetery to help place flags on veterans’ graves. Residents are asked to meet at 10 a.m. at the cemetery office, 100 W. South St., Franklin.
The American Legion will conduct a small program with a rifle volley and Taps by a bugler. Flags will be distributed to volunteers to be placed on the graves of all military veterans.
This service is open to all.
For information, call Bryon Thompson at 317-443-1183 or Larry Bundy at 317-736-3680.

**MAY 29:**

Franklin American Legion will host a Memorial Day ceremony at the Johnson County Courthouse at 11 a.m. May 29, with a pitch-in at the post following.
Franklin American Legion Post 205 is located at 1200 Park Ave. Call 317-738-9934 for more information.
**Ss. Francis & Clare Catholic Church**, 5901 W. Olive Branch Rd, Greenwood, will conduct its 14th annual Memorial Day Service May 29. The service will start at 8:45 a.m. with patriotic music, followed by a special Mass with prayers and ceremonies honoring veterans who made the ultimate sacrifice for the nation.
After the Mass, attendees will walk to the flagpole where flags will be lowered to half-mast, as well as a playing of taps, three rifle volleys, and the singing of the national anthem.
Refreshments will be served in St. Clare Hall.
In case of inclement weather, the events will be moved to the hall.
This event is open to the public and all are welcome.
Minister helped heal bodies in Iraq, souls at home

By Greg Seiter
Correspondent

Josh Crisp is proud of his family’s rich history in military service. It was only natural that as a young boy, he dreamed of continuing that legacy.

After committing to the U.S. Army in 2005, Crisp, now the lead pastor at Gospel Grove Church in Bargersville, did his basic training at Fort Benning, Georgia, before being sent to Fort Rucker, Alabama, for an additional six weeks of training.

“I had wanted to be a military policeman or in the infantry, but I was colorblind so they gave me two options. One was aviation operations and the other was to serve as a quartermaster,” he said. “I knew as a quartermaster, I would probably be doing some dirty laundry, so the decision was pretty easy.”

Crisp was sent to Fort Riley in Kansas, but almost immediately after arriving, his unit (the 82nd Med) was assigned to leave for Iraq.

“At that point, I felt a little bit of everything,” he recalled. “I was scared, excited and nervous. But the biggest thing was just the anticipation of the unknown. It was unnerving.

“Fortunately, my unit had already been there once or twice before, so we were surrounded by guys who had been through it. They told us what to expect and assured us they would take care of us. That helped a lot.”

Crisp was caught off guard by what he saw in Iraq.

“I was shocked at how much the country and al-Assad, our headquarters, was built up,” he said. “Headquarters had everything you needed and was pretty safe. But once you crossed the line, it was a different story.”

Crisp and 13 others were later shipped to Al Qaim, where they spent the majority of their time in Iraq. His unit focused on supplying medevac to the First and Second Marines in the area. One particular mission, his first, stands out in his mind.

“I saw a little girl, maybe 4, being worked on,” he recalled. “She had shrapnel in her belly, and her teddy bear had holes and shrapnel in the same location. It was very surreal seeing and being a part of that. It made you realize why you were over there.

“Basically, our job was to take care of the wounded. It didn’t matter who you were. We got you what you needed.”

It was also during that time that Crisp received a letter from his mother that would change his life.

“She told me a good Christian girl had started working for her, and she thought I should meet her,” he said. “When I finally saw Bethany, it was love at first sight.

“Our first date was around Thanksgiving, and we got serious pretty quick. But I was a party animal at the time, and she told me that if I kept living the way I had been, she wouldn’t date me anymore.

“I knew she was serious, so I started pushing alcohol away and going back to God. We got married in August 2007, before my second tour.”

He spent 15 months in Mosul, Iraq, during his second tour.

“That was a lot different,” he said. “During my first or second week there, we received a call on the radio from a guy calling in a mission who said his buddy had been shot in the head. We tried to calm him down and

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We Salute Our Troops, Past & Present!
Davis was called to serve veterans

By Cheryl Fiscus Jenkins

Correspondent

Rick Davis cherishes heartfelt moments of helping other soldiers. So the day a young man being sent home from the service asked to be baptized before boarding a bus to the civilian world, Davis, now executive minister at Victory Christian Church, called area churches on location in Georgia to get the job done.

Several months later, a crate of oranges arrived from the man, who had been released for physical inability to make it in the military. Davis has no knowledge where the fellow ended up, but the moment was a highlight in his service to this country and to a higher calling.

“I just hope somebody picked up and discipled to that kid,” he said.

Empathy and caring are a different attitude than what Davis, 65, describes when he decided to enter the U.S. Army upon graduation from Indian Creek High School in 1969. An acquaintance told him about the thrill of jumping out of airplanes as a paratrooper, appealing to his sense of adventure, attraction to fast vehicles and love of athletics. He was enticed by the excitement.

“It was like telling me this magical tale,” he said. “It was for all the wrong reasons. It was about being tough.”

As a paratrooper, Davis’ highest maneuver was from about 5,000 feet, he said, but most jumps stayed closer to the ground at 700 feet. It was a physically and mentally demanding occupation but rewarding. He still suffers from an arm injury after a “crash and burn” incident in which he scraped across a vehicle left in his drop zone.

“But I was really close to the ambulance,” he said, “so they came and got me.”

After several years of active duty in Germany, Davis traded in his paratrooper beret and jump boots for a desk job at the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs in Indianapolis and as an Army Reserve drill sergeant at Camp Atterbury.

He spent more than two decades at the VA helping veterans with their benefits. He served as president and CEO of Family Wealth Counseling Cos. in Franklin from 1996 to 2000 and has always enjoyed empowering veterans to find civilian employment and to succeed in life.

“That has been my whole life almost – veterans,” he said. “A veteran is always the best hire – male or female. They have proven they can go through a lot.”

Davis admits being a drill sergeant differs from his spiritual nature, but he used his role to set a good example, such as commanding soldiers to clean up dirty lyrics in various military chants and extending a more approachable demeanor when addressing his troops.

“Some kids liked the cleanup, and some thought it was soft,” he said. “There is a big difference in yelling at someone and using a command voice. We tried to use a command voice.”

Davis wore an Army sweatshirt recently to his work at Victory Christian Church, where he has served as executive minister since 2001. He proudly honors an American flag in his office. The church salutes veterans any opportunity it can, he said, and often gives a coin to servicemen honoring all armed forces and symbolizing the full armor of God.

Rick Davis

Age: 65
Birthplace: Brownstown
Hometown: Franklin
Residence: Franklin
Years of Service: 24 years, 1969 to 1993
Branch of Service: U.S. Army
Assigned Unit: 70th Division Training
Duties: Drill sergeant and training non-commissioned officer
Rank Attained: Sergeant first class
Military Honors: American and German Paratrooper Wings, Drill Sergeant Badge and various military decorations; Small Business Veteran Advocate of the Year
Family: Wife, Margie; five children; 12 grandchildren; one great-grandchild

Davis wore an Army sweatshirt recently to his work at Victory Christian Church, where he has served as executive minister since 2001. He proudly honors an American flag in his office. The church salutes veterans any opportunity it can, he said, and often gives a coin to servicemen honoring all armed forces and symbolizing the full armor of God.

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www.franklinccc.org
Sunday Worship Experience - 10am
Sunday Morning Small Groups - 9am
Service
FROM PAGE 22

the front lines, then came home with post traumatic stress disorder. He went out drinking, blacked out and woke a day later in a back alley in Louisville, Kentucky.

“I know the warning signs, because that’s what I did,” Service said. “Young people in the military don’t have the experience to see things about themselves. Sometimes they find themselves lost.”

Jason is doing great now. He is attending a service dog trainers’ school near St. Louis and plans to attend a service dog trainers’ school after school near St. Louis and plans to attend a service dog trainers’ school after. He enjoys spending time with his wife and children, as well as volunteering at local animal shelters.

Crisp FROM PAGE 26

get him to tell us where they were at. It was very difficult. We could hear everything going on in the background.”

As his time in Mosul was coming to a close, Crisp considered re-enlisting once again. He was interested in drill sergeant school but also had hopes for peace-time service.

“They offered big re-enlistment bonuses, but nothing ever came about. It just didn’t feel right.”

After leaving the Army, Crisp strived to become a U.S. marshal and even took a test hoping to qualify to be a state police officer. But he was rejected for both positions because of being colorblind.

While working at a VA hospital, Crisp also served as a Sunday school teacher at his church, and it was through that experience that he participated in a mission trip to Uganda that completely changed his career path.

“It was about 2012 when I was called into the ministry,” he said. After completing his seminary work in Fort Worth, Texas, and earning a master’s degree in divinity, Crisp felt called to the Bargersville area.

“I was interested in being involved in ministry in some way, and this opportunity came about through the church,” he said. “I knew this was the place for me.”

As a sergeant, I had to have plans ready to go at a moment’s notice. Crisp believes his military training was actually intended to prepare him for ministry work.

“War teaches you how to rely on others, just like church does,” he said. “A pastor can’t do everything. There are people who help out, too.”

“As a sergeant, I had to have plans in place for my troops. In the church, we have a Bible for that, but as a pastor, I’m able to share that direction with others.”

Davis
FROM PAGE 27

He has followed in his father, Ora’s, footsteps of becoming a minister, but his faithful path has not always been clear. He remembers changing churches every few years as a youngster and was skeptical of that lifestyle.

“I always thought I wanted to do that, but truthfully I don’t think I had the faith,” he said.

Faith and character are what attracted Maribeth Alspach to Davis a handful of years ago as they worked together supporting families in a military ministry. Clerk-treasurer for the town of New Whiteland, Alspach also found Davis easy to talk to when her son served in Iraq and when her granddaughter experienced trauma after being on site when the stage collapsed at the Indiana State Fair.

“He is very intelligent and a great teacher,” she said. “A patriot. He loves his country, which I admire tremendously in people.”

Davis holds a master’s of sacred literature degree from Louisville Bible College and a place in his heart for leading people to Christ. He counsels individuals on eternal enlightenment and feels blessed to have served in the military and to be serving in the ministry for his retirement career.

“I am having the time of my life,” he said. “To me, this is the highest calling I have had. Helping point people to Christ, that is really my mission. It comes down to loving people, broken people, and introducing them to Jesus.”

Williams
FROM PAGE 24

get across to someone who has not seen it, but we are truly fortunate here.”

As all service personnel tend to agree, the military offers lessons that differ for everyone. For Williams, the experience was a tremendous lesson that forced him to get together with all types of people and get along. It reinforces a group mentality that you are all one.

“Everyone succeeds or everyone fails,” he says. “That is how it works. You have to work as a team, and I think that is an important lesson.”
Whitlock
FROM PAGE 19

need to be involved, and as we participate, we make it our own community. For Dad, Edinburgh is his community and, in some respects, his extended family.”

Whitlock is also proud of his work at the American Legion. In addition to having served in many different officer positions, he has been the Honor Guard coordinator at Post 233 for over 30 years, and he has coordinated the Hoosier Boys State and Scholarship selection process for 40 years.

Another part of Whitlock’s community service began in 1975 when he became involved in local politics. He ran for town council, was beaten by 52 votes, but won the 1980 race. In the meantime, the steadfast Republican was elected as a precinct committeeman in 1976 and remains in the same position to this day. He was also appointed to the planning commission and served for eight years with four years as president. He has 24 years of service on the board of zoning appeals, 20 years as chairman, and was also the redevelopment commission chairman when Timbergate Golf Course was built.

Edinburgh Fire and Rescue Chief Allen Smith’s path crosses quite often with Whitlock’s through their joint community efforts with Thanksgiving dinners, the trustee’s office and Smith’s coordination of the Edinburgh Cheer Fund.

“Larry is a true-blooded Republican, a gentleman and a very good friend. We make a good team,” Smith said. “He’s one of those guys people look up to because when he puts his foot down, it’s down.”

In 1989, Whitlock took Ray Walton’s position as Blue River Township trustee and held it for the next 25 years. Although Walton returned to the position not long ago, Whitlock still serves as chairman of the advisory committee. Walton agrees with Smith’s summation of Whitlock’s integrity.

“Larry is very civic-minded, and he never wavers from what he feels is right,” Walton said. “I admire his military service, the way he raised his kids and his good sense of humor. He’s good for the community.”

Walton described Whitlock as gruff but good-natured, a depiction with which many folks in Edinburgh would agree, even Whitlock himself.

“I’m a big, fun-loving, overbearing, son of a gun,” Whitlock said. “I always said that my wife had the patience of Job and was as quiet as I was mouthy.” Kay, the love of his life, passed away on April 28, 2012, exactly 51 years and one day after the two met at that dance in Pittsburgh so many years ago.

The dance that he never would have attended had it not been for the path that he began the day he joined the U.S. Air Force.

Ramey
FROM PAGE 20

Nineveh High School in 1950.

His parents, William and Mary, were both civilian workers at Camp Atterbury, his father working in the maintenance department, while his mother worked at the hospital. Including Ramey, the couple had 11 children, seven boys and four girls.

Ramey and his wife, Mary Jane, were married for 54 years before her death in 2009. The couple raised three children. Ramey, who was a member of the bricklayers union, laid tile and brick his entire career, before his retirement in 1994.

These days, Ramey enjoys spending time with his best friend, Virginia Moore, a widow who had been married for 56 years. Moore ran a grocery store in Peoga and worked at Eli Lilly, before her retirement.

Ramey stays busy carving wood sculptures and other woodwork, canning vegetables and tending to his 15 acres of land, which includes a lake he built himself. He and his four remaining siblings get together on the third Monday of the month for breakfast, rotating hosting the event at their different homes. It is a good way to stay involved in each other’s lives and to reminisce, he said.

Ramey is not too sentimental about his time in the service, though, stating that he hasn’t really stayed in touch with anyone from his time there. He, however, is glad he served his country and says it gave him valuable life lessons.

Grace United Methodist Church is located one mile west of I-65 on SR 44 in Franklin.

Worship Times: Saturday at 5:30 p.m. and Sunday at 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m.

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National Guard units from all over the country come to Camp Atterbury and MUTC to train, as do many full-time military and civilian agencies and even military personnel from abroad.

Its largest and best-known exercise is Operation Vibrant Response, which averages 6,000 participants who must communicate, coordinate and react to a simulated disaster, such as a nuclear bomb detonating in Indianapolis. The exercise, which was first held in 2010, includes Guard troops and a variety of civilian agencies, including police and firefighters, medical first-responders and anyone else who might be called upon to help in a disaster and work in an inter-agency, high stress environment.

Trainers at MUTC bring all aspects together. Pitt said this could include helping various units coordinate times and missions to get more value out of their experience by training together, which better simulates what the soldiers must do in the real world.

Maj. Gen. Courtney Carr, Indiana’s adjutant general, named him to the post and emphasized community involvement, Pitt said.

“As the commander, I do a little bit of everything,” Pitt said. “Even briefings and tours. It’s different things to different people. We try to offer the best value solution for testing and training to anyone chartered with winning the peace or defending the homeland.”

As an administrator, Pitt is on a different adventure than his overseas deployments, but he would go again if called, he said.

“With all the training I did, I kind of miss it. There’s a lot going on here, but I would miss it for an opportunity to deploy again.”

John Pitt at the Johnson County Armory in Franklin.

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Orme

FROM PAGE 3

Pensacola was a wonderful place to serve, he said. “I really enjoyed flying out over the Gulf at full moon. It was just unbelievable beauty. You didn’t want to come down. I came down and thought, ‘Now I know what heaven looks like.’”

The base had a golf course, and Orme spent his free time playing, often entertaining military brass who came to visit. “At times, I lived the country club life in the military. It’s kind of embarrassing to say that, but that’s how it went.”

He also played basketball and always served on the base team wherever he was stationed. He had the chance to meet John Wooden, the famous UCLA head coach, although the two met in the boxing ring instead of on the basketball court. Wooden joined the Navy in 1942 and was stationed in Iowa, where Orme was attending preflight school. Wooden was Orme’s boxing coach.

Wooden attended Martinsville High School and lived next door to Orme’s aunt and uncle. Orme recalled those memories a few years ago when ESPN reporter Seth Davis called him while researching his 2014 book, “Wooden: A Coach’s Life.” Orme told Davis what life was like for cadets at the school and how much everyone liked and admired Wooden. Orme is quoted in the book.

Orme did not deploy overseas during the war. He regrets that sometimes, he said, but also realizes he might not be here today if he had deployed. He attended flight school when he enlisted and assumed the role of an instructor instead. “That’s just how the ball bounced. I didn’t request it or anything,” he said.

After the war was over, Orme remained in the Marines as a reservist and was recalled to train pilots during the Korean War. The Vought F-4U Corsair was also used during that war.

Orme graduated from Southport High School and enlisted as soon as he was able. He remembers the Sunday morning Pearl Harbor attack. “I got out from church. It was on the TV and everything. I told the folks, ‘Well, I’ll be going,’ which I did,” he said.

After enlisting, he trained in Texas, Iowa and North Carolina. He joined the Marines to fly the Corsair, a plane he had admired for its speed and high-altitude capabilities. The Corsair, Orme said, was the hottest fighter plane in WWII.

“Its speed and altitude were the key components. We had the advantage over the Japanese fighter planes. I wanted to be a pilot, not in a trench someplace. It worked out pretty well for me,” he said.

After his discharge in 1959, he moved back to the south side and later to the Center Grove area. He was in the life insurance business for 50 years. He didn’t fly after leaving the military since the hobby is so expensive, he said. But he had friends with pilot’s licenses and enjoyed flying with them, especially to go play golf.

In 2013, he was able to go on the Indy Honor Flight to Washington, D.C., to see the World War II Memorial.

He now lives at Franklin United Methodist Community. When he goes out, he proudly wears his service cap, to which he clips his Navy wings and major oak leaf insignia. Whenever he wears that cap, people stop to talk to him about his service and thank him, his wife, Joyce, said.
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