

Lt Col William Harold Nauta

Born Mar 5, 1953
Ft Riley, KS

Died:

Period of Service: Viet Nam
to Desert Storm
Sources: *J Gay interview,*
and bio form

Enlisted in Army in 1973, in Appeton, WI

Trained at Ft Leonard Wood, MO, then to advanced individual training at Fort Gordon, Georgia for Military Police school. That lasted until February, 1974.

Because he came into the Army with an associates degree, he came into Army as a PFC. His degree was in police science so he was picked for MP school. He was assigned to the Army Security Agency after MP school in Arlington Hall Station.

Then was sent to Korea, to Taegu to the Fort Humphrey just outside of Seoul. Attended the 8th Army NCO Academy while there. Taught how to deal with soldiers, how to deal with problems and issues. Also guarded a lot of equipment, "glorified guards."

Then went to Officer Candidate School at Ft Benning, GA, Oct 1976 to Feb 1977. Broke leg two weeks before graduation. Couldn't go to Airborne school.

Sent to Ft Riley, KS to First Infantry Division where he was born. His father was stationed there when he was in service. Spent three years there, much of it as platoon leader.

Left service in late 1979 to go back to college. But then decided to go back into active service in the Individual Ready Reserve. Was sent back to Washington DC to work on a project called the Functional Area Assessment and Functional Review process. It was in Alexandria, VA and he spent a lot of time at the Pentagon. He gave reviews of the Army Reserve to the four star general reviewing the elements of national defense. A lot of work was needed to go through all the files and records to compile the review. He had kept much of the material he had assembled from the functional reviews, since they were not classified.

Sent back to Ft Benning to design non-resident instruction courses for the infantry for about six months. It was for reserve units around the country. Set up standards and levels of expectations. Between assignments he would go back to Ft Riley and live as a civilian, though his time was counted toward retirement. Was trying to get back into active service. In 1985 he was activated and sent to Ft Meade MD. From there to records center in St Louis, MO where he spent two years. Then he was sent to The Command and General Staff College at Ft Leavenworth, KS., a sort of graduate school for the Army. Had gotten a degree in criminal justice from Wichita State College and so was sent to Ft McPherson GA in the heart of Atlanta to the Army Reserve Command. It is one of the major commands of the military. He was assigned to incapacitation pay for the reservists. Had to judge the truthfulness of the requests, and mitigating circumstances. Spent three years doing that 1991-1994. Then was assigned to the Pentagon. Continued working on incapacitation issues and also the Army board for the Correction of Military Records. Retired from there in 1999 as Lieutenant Colonel. Two years later, on September 11, 2001, the terrorist plane that hit the Pentagon hit the space where his office was.

Commander of American Legion Post 402 2011-2013.

Lt Col William Harold Nauta



VETERANS HISTORY PROJECT
Preserving Stories of Service for Future Generations

Interview with

William H.Nauta

Conducted by Mr. John Gay

September 22, 2011

This project sponsored by the Indian Prairie Public Library
in partnership with the Library of Congress

This is John Gay with Bill Nauta, current commander of the Gislason-Richter Post 402 American Legion on Washington Island. We're talking with Bill about his experiences in the military and what he is doing thereafter. So, Bill, tell us what you were doing when you entered the service, at what age you did, where it took place.

Well, right after high school I went to a two-year vocational technical school. I received my Associates degree. I enlisted in the Army when I was 20.

Where was this?

I was in Appleton, Wisconsin.

In the summer of 1973, when I was 20 years old, I went into a recruiting station and enlisted in the Army.

That was in Appleton?

Yes.

Where did they send you?

I went in, in September and went to Fort LeonardWood, [Missouri] for basic training. I was in basic training for 2 ½ - 3 months. Then I went to my advanced individual training at Fort Gordon, Georgia for MP school. I went to MP school from November, 1973 until February, 1974.

Now at Fort LeonardWood you were there in the fall?

Yes. September through November.

So it was still pretty warm down there.

Yes.

I was at Chaffee. I was there in the wintertime and it was pretty yucky. The mud got ankle deep. Was basic training kind of a startling event for you?

It was kind of what I expected. My father was in the service and I had friends who had served. I was prepared for what it was, and it lived up to my expectations.

Were you enlisted for four or two years?

Three years – a little over three years. I had an Associates degree so I came into the Army as a PFC, although they wouldn't allow me to wear it at basic training. I was just like everybody else. But my pay [grade] was E3 right from the get-go.

Was that because you had military training in college or just the fact that you had a college degree?

They had a program at that time, if you had two years of post high school study. I qualified for it and was able to come in at a higher grade.

That was neat. How did they pick you for MP school? Did you volunteer?

That was another thing when I was recruited. I had an Associate degree in police science – that was my major. Because of that I wanted to pursue law enforcement. So the recruiter said they had a program at the time where if you qualified you could pretty much pick your MOS. And I picked military police.

How big is FortGordon? Where is it near?

[It's near] Augusta, Georgia. It used to be the signal school and also the MP school for the Army. I'm not sure what it is now. But the MP school later transferred to Fort McClellan, Alabama. Not too long after that, because I think maybe two years after I went to MP school there they transferred that program to FortMcClellan.

What do they do in MP training? Is there a lot of theory or ethics kinds of things that you have to learn? Is there something physical?

It's a little bit of everything. There's some physical aspects – apprehending suspects and things like that. But there's also some legal training – classroom training – as far as the rights soldiers have when you're confronting them.

Is this a sort of Miranda Right involved? Is it the same kind of thing?

It's hard to remember, exactly. A lot of the schooling that I had in the civilian program I had gone to applied. I think I had kind of a head start on some of the other soldiers there because I did have some background in it and so it came fairly easily.

But you asked about the physical part. I know we had a class called 'judo,' where they taught us a little bit of judo – not a heck of a lot, but a little. I remember the sawdust pits where we'd have the training, you'd take a tumble and pair up with your other classmates. The instructors would show you different techniques.

You had to look powerful if nothing else.

Yes.

We had pistol training. We had to qualify with the .45. We had a lot of work, at that time it was the service weapon for the military policeman.

It was holstered and you wore it on your belt, and wherever it went you went.

Right.

While I was at basic training they had a separate recruiter who talked to me about joining ASA – Army Security Agency. It was a special branch of the Army. They had MOS's of all natures. They had MP's, cooks, clerks, everything. So I did at that time sign up to go into that area of the Army. So I was destined for an assignment in their agency – the Army Security Agency – after MP school.

Where was that?

The headquarters was at Arlington [Hall] Station. It's no longer an active Army post.

In Virginia?

Yes. Just outside of Washington, D.C.

ASA had field stations all over the world. Later I was transferred to some of these. But this was a limited, close-knit segment of the Army. People in Vietnam, they had folks in Vietnam and they had their own. They were managed by their own. They're no longer in existence. It was based on intel. Most of the officers were all MI people and things like that.

But you had to have a security clearance. I'm not boasting or anything like that, but you had to have an absolutely clean record as far as no misdemeanors or anything like that on your record. So I think they scarfed up what they could sometimes coming in, because somewhere along the way they'd find someone who wouldn't qualify.

They asked me if I was interested in the intelligence service. I said yes. But I was just a dumb recruit at that time and didn't know what that meant. And they asked if I'd ever had a traffic ticket of any kind. I said I had had a speeding ticket and they said that took care of me – I was out.

It wasn't that exclusive for me. But I remember later talking to friends from high school and they said they had a pretty thorough interview from someone looking into my background. So apparently they did go out. When you applied you put down some references, but I think they also talked to people you're not aware of. Somehow they find out you had certain acquaintances.

Kirby was telling me at the fish boil the other night that he was put into the military intelligence. He said they had people asking around the Island what his character was like and all that. The people thought maybe he'd gone off the deep end or something. So you were in Fort Gordon for 8 or 10 weeks?

Something like that. It was November – sometime in November – until the first week of February.

And when you got out they had some kind of a graduation party for you and said now you're assigned to ...

People scattered and went in different directions. And I, along with a classmate from MP school, the two of us reported at the very same time to Arlington Hall Station, which was the headquarters for ASA.

Is that downtown Arlington?

It's just down the road from FortMeyer. It's right on Route 50.

My son lives in Arlington. That's why I ask this.

What it later became, I mean years later – this was 1974 – 1975 that I was stationed there – somewhere in the late 1980's I think they converted it. I think they pretty much demolished all the old buildings. The government owns the property – not necessarily the Department of Defense; part of it is owned by the federal government in some capacity. And part of it, the National Guard Bureau built their headquarters there. There is that big building that is owned by the National Guard Bureau. But the buildings I worked in don't exist anymore, I don't think. There might be a couple of them, but for the most part they were built in the early part of the 20th century and I think they just flattened them and started over.

You were there for how long?

Just a year – almost exactly a year: February of 1974 to March of 1975. And then I went to Korea.

In 1975. Nothing was really going on there at the time.

No.

So did you get up near the 38th Parallel?

I was assigned to Taegu, which is in the south central part of South Korea. It was part of ASA – Army Security Agency. Our field station was at FortHumphreys, which is just outside of Seoul. I spent thirteen months – it was a thirteen month tour, which at the time was the duration in Korea. I did go very close to the DMZ. I attended the 8thArmyNCOAcademy while I was there.

What does that mean? It is for non-commissioned officers or what?

You had to be an E4 or Spec4 or above to attend. They had NCO academies all over run by three-star and four-star level. For Korea it was the 8thArmyAcademy.

It gave you an edge up, I guess, to making sergeant. It was also a kind of prep course if you had any ambition of going to OCS. I remember people it was kind of a way to get ...

The next step.

If you wanted to just get exposed to it. And at the time I was kind of thinking about applying to OCS, so I applied for the NCO academy.

It's a one-month course – a little bit of everything. We had map-reading skill training, giving training classes – presentations and things like that, and they'd grill us on the presentations and preparing the training and how to administer a test. It was just a whole broad exposure to different things as a leader.

Trying to get you to think in terms of a non-commissioned officer and how to handle troops.

How to counsel soldiers, how to deal with issues and problems.

When you were actually on duty – you had a year there where your day was made up of what? Did you go around the post?

Even though I was an MP, it was not a traditional law enforcement role that I had, like a lot of other MP's would have at different Army posts. Because within ASA, we guarded a lot of the equipment – the very sophisticated equipment they had. I was on an air field and they had U21 airplanes that our pilots flew.

They're a grade up from the U2?

No. They're prop planes that had all these antennae. They looked like porcupines flying in the air. They're not fast. I don't think they were even at high altitudes.

Like AWAC's or something?

Yes, but much smaller. They were just a two-person aircraft. They would fly up to the DMZ and just fly back and forth, back and forth, picking up signals. As an MP we had a presence at the hangar, around the clock – 24 hours. We'd have to make our checks and surveillance.

Like a constant guard duty?

Yes. We were glorified guards, really. And people coming and going to the office buildings had to have special clearances, and we had to ensure they had the right badges. And if they were a visitor, to make sure they were authorized to be there – they had a purpose of being there. And because it's in a foreign country you had foreign nationals who worked on the Army installation. We didn't want people wandering into our area.

Talk about an ‘adopted step child,’ we were an Army company-size element, but we were on a ROK air force base – Republic of Korea air force base. So the base itself was owned by the South Koreans. And there was a U.S. Air Force squadron that was assigned there – in the Army that would be a battalion level...So we were like the third pecking order down. All the facilities that we used there – the mess hall, the PX, the snack bar, the movie theater – they were all U.S. Air Force facilities, and yet we were also on a Korean Air Force base. So there were a lot of different uniforms walking around there – Air Force uniforms, Army uniforms, Korean Air Force uniforms.

Did you ever have anyone try to put anything over on you? Any incidents?

No, nothing to speak of, nothing exciting.

So things went pretty smooth for the time you were there?

Yes.

We got *Stars and Stripes* newspaper as a regular connection to what was going on in the world and what was going on back in the United States. I remember that the famous departure from Vietnam, where the helicopter was on the roof of the embassy, occurred while I was in Korea. I just remember that was July of 1975, which is when I was there. Subsequent to that was when the boat – the people who were fleeing, the boat people ...

Was there any reaction on post to all those events?

I don’t recall, anything.

It was far away.

Yes. It wasn’t in my world. I wasn’t an officer and I hung around with people who were there to do our job. I don’t recall any reaction.

Did you have a sense then that you were going to spend more time in the service?

I wasn’t sure. My roommate at the time was really looking into going to OCS. I was getting close to the end of my three-year enlistment, and I really thought about probably leaving the service and going back to college on the GI Bill or something like that.

My roommate in the barracks where I lived was going to go up to Seoul to take the OCS entrance exam. He wanted somebody to go up there with him for company and said, “Why don’t you come with me and we’ll both take it together.” So just kind of on a whim I went up there with him and took the exam.

Did you get a grade that you could ...

I don't recall. I know that another part of the process was to appear before a board – board of officers – just to march in, salute and stand at parade rest and get grilled on questions. I was ready for it. I was in Class A uniform. I don't remember if that was in Taegu or Seoul, but it was while I was in Korea. And I went before that board and put together all my paperwork after I appeared before the board, not really knowing how I fared or what was going to happen.

And then I got orders after my thirteen months in Korea was completed. I had orders for Fort Bliss, Texas. So I reported to Fort Bliss, Texas in April of 1976. And I was there maybe just a few weeks and got orders for OCS for Fort Benning, Georgia. So my time at FortBliss was pretty short. I was there for...about three... months..., and then reported to Fort Benning.

That's OCS school?

Yes.

I was at FortBenning in July – the hottest part of the year. I reported to Fort Benning, Georgia. But I had just come from FortBliss, which is just outside El Paso, Texas so I was used to the heat, although it was much more humid at FortBenning.

But I reported in the early part of July at FortBenning. It was right after the Bicentennial – the 1976 Fourth of July celebrations. I remember watching that at FortBliss and then days later getting on the road, driving to FortBenning.

So you were in Fort Benning at the beginning of July, 1976. How long was OCS?

It's three-months – they refer to us as '90-day-wonders' because it's almost precisely 90 days. So it was like the middle of July to the middle of October.

And what is the training like? A lot of head work or is there some physical as well?

A little bit of everything. There's a lot of running. I remember I really got into the running mode. We were running all the time, and in formation. So it was physical as well as classroom. Again, I think I had prepared myself and kind of knew what I was getting into and was ready for it. It lived up to my expectations. The fact that it was at FortBenning, the home of the infantry, I expected it to be kind of rugged and leaning toward the macho hardcore stuff. And there was a little bit of that.

I did have the distinction of being in one of the last all male OCS classes. Prior to that, all the officer training programs were segregated. They didn't have an OCS for women, and they were going to make it co-ed for both genders.

One of the TAC officers there was a female. She was an observer. She wasn't really the head TAC of that platoon.

What is a TAC?

Tactical officer... . What they were was the equivalent of a drill [instructor] in basic training. We called the person in charge the drill sergeant, and in OCS they referred to them as TAC officers.

You have platoons. I was in one of the platoons with a TAC officer who was a first lieutenant. He was in charge of my platoon as far as being the person who would march us to class and wherever we had to go to receive our training. He wasn't the instructor for any of the classes, but he was in charge of our element. In a company you have five different TAC officers, one heading each platoon. But this one female, I remember, everyone was told she was there to observe because when they would make the transition to having females and males, she was making mental notes and evaluating what changes would have to be made.

Was she pretty tough or did she intrude herself?

There were times. They knew they had a certain role they had to play, so they didn't want to get too emotionally caught up in what we were thinking. They had to do their thing.

Did your buddy get to OCS as well?

No.

He didn't qualify.

No. And he was pretty shattered about it. Just before I left Korea he got word and he was pretty disappointed. It had something to do with his family, too – his relationship with his father. He wanted his father to be proud of him or something like that. He thought he disappointed his father. I thought he was pretty hard on himself.

Did you get a second chance at it?

Oh, yeah. I think he did later. He got out of the service – we stayed in touch; we corresponded for a while – and I think he went back to college and joined an ROTC. Then he stayed in the Reserves – I don't think he went back on active duty, I believe.

So after your 90 days you then ...

Just prior to graduation – prior to getting your commission – you find out what branch they're going to assign you: quartermaster, infantry, artillery, whatever. And it's the whole gamut, the whole array of branches. You do apply. You submit paperwork putting down your preferences. You have to put down so many combat branches, so many combat service support branches, and there's no guarantee you'll get any of them but you put down what you'd prefer and are qualified for. I wanted to get into either military intelligence or MP's because I had that background from my enlisted services. But the wisdom of the Army was such that, no, they had other ideas for me. They put me in the infantry.

As the combat branches went, I did have infantry as number one on my list. Because if I've got to be in a combat branch I don't want to be riding around in a tank, I don't want artillery. I thought I wanted to be ...

Where you could see daylight.

Yes. So I put that as number one. Plus, I was influenced by the fact that I was there at FortBenning and it did kind of excite me a little bit. I had intentions of going to airborne school, Ranger school, pathfinder school: If I was going to be in infantry I was going to go all the way. So I did sign up for all that.

So they put you in infantry ...

Then when you graduate you receive your commission, your bar, your second lieutenant bar. Then everybody scatters – going to respective schooling wherever that might be in the country.

For me, being infantry, it was right there at FortBenning. So I was destined to be there at FortBenning for another three months or so, so I stayed right there at FortBenning. Since I was now a lieutenant I got to live in different facilities than the[barrack]. But I didn't have to uproot myself to go somewhere else. So then, like a week after getting my commission, I commenced the next class.

What did you do in those following 90 days or so? Did you have a daily routine that was different from what you'd been doing?

Actually, it was a lot of the same stuff that we had OCS, I thought. I mean, OCS was kind of infantry-oriented. So I got a lot of the same stuff. But it was a different atmosphere because now you were an officer, and your instructors and everybody – you don't have that pressure. You still have to pass exams and listen and study. You get quizzes and tests and things like that, and final exams. It was just ...

A little more comradeship?

Yes. You just didn't feel this heat that you were trying to prove yourself.

So we're up to 1977?

Yes: October, 1976 to February, 1977 I was at IOBC – Infantry Officer Basic Course.

And then what happened?

I was supposed to go to airborne school right after completion of Infantry Officer Basic Course – IOBC. And about two weeks before graduation I broke my leg. So I had a cast on. But they said I was far enough into the program that I wasn't going to get recycled. So I graduated with a cast on.

They kept me there until I could go to airborne school – at least a month – and then all of a sudden it occurred to the doctors that I still wasn't going to be ready for airborne school even though I had my cast off because it was going to take a while.

So I got sent to my first assignment after I got my cast off, which was Fort Riley, Kansas. So I never did attend airborne school. Never in my career did I have the opportunity.

How did you break your leg?

It was on a run. I broke my ankle, but it was a full leg cast. I broke it on a rut or something – uneven terrain. I just snapped it. It was pretty painful.

Airborne wouldn't be so good for you if you're coming down on a parachute!

Yes. It's been tender ever since then. That was the early part of 1977, and to this day whenever I'm jogging I've got to be a little careful.

So what happened at FortRiley? What is that?

It's the First Infantry Division. It was there. It was a prominent division during Vietnam. It was during World War II as well, although it wasn't assigned to FortRiley at that time. But the First Infantry Division has a long history.

Actually I can tell you about Fort Riley, Kansas. I was born there. And that's why I had asked to go there. Again, it was one of those dream sheets where you put down your preferences and there's no guarantee you're going to get it; in this case I did.

My father was in the Army briefly during the Korean War, and he was assigned to Fort Riley, Kansas. He never left FortRiley. He never did go to Korea, but he was there. And I was born there. And I guess while I was still an infant my dad was discharged and went back to Wisconsin, so I never grew up there. I was less than a year old when I left FortRiley.

But I figured I'd need to be assigned there someday in my adult life, so I put that down on my list and, lo and behold, that's what I got. It's not exactly the most exotic place to live because it's in the middle of Kansas.

I remember one time there was a news story about the governor of Kansas was going to promote Kansas as a great place to visit. It was going to be a big program. They were going to launch this program just as soon as he got back from vacation – in Florida! So how long were you in FortRiley.

It turned out to be a lot longer than I thought. I was there for three years.

Now were you specialized in the MP at that time?

No. I was in the infantry.

But you hadn't been put in to anything specific.

No. As a second lieutenant I was the platoon leader in charge of a platoon of about forty soldiers. And I think after a year-and-a-half or so I got promoted to first

lieutenant, and I became a company executive officer – XO – which is the second in command from the captain of the company. I started off in Bravo company and went to Alpha company and became the XO at Alpha company.

In my six years in the service I did have an obligation as an officer for three years. So my three-year obligation was finished. And I thought maybe the grass was greener on the other side, and I thought I would get out of the service go back to college on the GI Bill, get my bachelor's degree and pursue civilian life.

1980?

Late 1979 – just in time for the fall of 1979 college year. I got out and went to KansasStateUniversity, which is right there in Manhattan, Kansas, right near FortRiley. In fact I was living in Manhattan at the time, commuting to the post. I was in a landscape architecture course – what I was pursuing at the time at KansasStateUniversity, funded significantly by the GI Bill. And I joined the Kansas National Guard and became a troop commander in an armored cavalry National Guard unit.

Then I realized pretty shortly after I did that that I should have stayed in the Army on active duty because I still could have gotten my college by going to night school. I realized fairly quickly that maybe I shouldn't have made that departure. So then I applied to go back on active duty.

Within a few months?

It took a while, but I eventually got back on active duty.

Did they accept you back to FortRiley?

No. I was a in a completely different program then.

Where did you re-up; in Kansas?

Well, I was in the National Guard for two or three years. Then I went into the Army Reserve. As a reservist I didn't belong to a specific unit. I was in the IRR – Individual Ready Reserve. The way they managed the IRR people was if you were willing to go to different assignments for short stints on active duty if they needed somebody – if they needed somebody at this or that location – I was willing to do that. And I did.

I ended up going, initially, back to the Washington, D.C. area to work on a project called the Functional Area Assessment and Functional Review process. That's a long thing to get into, but I did that for six months.

Were you back in Arlington?

I worked in the Hoffman Building, which is in Alexandria, Virginia and did an awful lot of work at the Pentagon. I was going back and forth to the Pentagon. But my office was in the HoffmanBuilding. On the METRO line, the subway system, was in

close proximity to the Pentagon. In my daily routine I was in both places pretty much on a regular basis.

They had a thing – I'm sure they don't have it anymore – but for a while they had a thing where the Chief of Staff of the Army would get briefed on the status of each branch – the infantry, the armor, the artillery, the quartermaster, the signal corps; all the different branches. And they would have a thorough examination of those branches. Ultimately maybe even the Secretary of Defense got the briefing, I think. But the Chief of Staff – the four-star who was in charge of the Army – got this thorough briefing. And they had people who worked on those projects. They had regular Army people, National Guard people, Reserve people. They would all give their respective profile and examination. I was giving it for the Army Reserve. So everything to do with the infantry in the Army Reserve – all the data, all the different readiness aspects as far as people, equipment, facilities, quality of their training, their reenlistment data – were they losing too many people because they didn't want to re-up in that particular branch ...

How did you gather all of that material?

It was a lot of painstaking[work] going through files and different things. And you would get input. I got a lot of it that I saved because it was like doing a PhD thesis in a way because you really did a lot of work. Then you gave the presentation. And I was a young captain at the time and nervous as heck. I had to talk first to a one-star general, then the next step up I'd have to go to another level and ultimately to the four-star general. But it was a good experience.

And, also, if you wanted to get back onto regular active duty, like I was, it was a way to get exposed – somebody sees and thinks you're doing a good job, you might get some good credit. I happened to be looking at all the old functional review and functional area assessments. I have boxes of stuff I had been working on because I was proud of all the work I had done on them.

So all the reports – the ones you kept – were the ones you turned in.

Yes. They weren't classified or anything.

Did you have to phone people around the country, or did you work with stuff that was already available?

It was stuff the Pentagon pretty much already had. I guess it was more like you had so many places that had segments of information, and you just had to put it together. Because somebody else might have a component and you just had to put it together and give these briefings.

Let me ask. This is a very sensitive and sophisticated kind of assignment. Did they see something in you that they felt they had to put you in there?

I think I was lucky in that the guy who managed the IRR ... I don't know. Maybe they looked in my file and thought I might be okay. I think when I first reported

there and things hadn't worked out right away they might have given me the boot and got somebody else to replace me. But I did okay.

I was there for six months. That process took from January, 1984 until June, 1984. Then I got another one of these short assignments to Fort Benning. They had some things that they wanted me to do. It was designing non-resident instruction courses for the infantry, for the Reserves. I worked strictly in an office environment for another six months.

You made up programs for people in the Reserves around the country?

Yes. It could be like tactical training – the process of putting together a training program. Or it could be just taking weapons apart, or mortars. But it was a step-by-step instruction on paper.

To do it the Army way?

Yes. And what standards had to be met to go to the next level. It was a lot of detail – making sure all the elements and details were there; the step-by-step process.

In the meantime I was applying to go on active duty, and I got my orders while I was at Fort Benning to go on active duty.

I reported in February, 1985 to Fort Meade, Maryland, to First Army headquarters. Then I had my foot back in the door, back on active duty – not the short six-month stints.

I had done between the fall of 1979 until the fall of 1984 I had done a number of three-month or one-month active duty stints all over. I was at Fort Hood, Texas for a while. I was at Fort Riley for a number of times because I was still living in Kansas at the time. Any time they needed a Reservist for a project or someone to fill in or something like that I was sort of like on-call. My manager knew I was ready and willing to go. My wife was cooperative knowing I might be gone for a while. So I was doing that to show I was sincere in wanting to go back on active duty. And that's probably why I got that good assignment when I went back to Washington after that six months.

Did they actually say you were in the service at that time – even though it was IRR?

Well, it counts towards your retirement – two weeks here, two months there – it all tallies up for active duty time. So the longevity as far as getting your 20 years in, it all adds up.

When you were in a particular program, did they send you right then to another program or did you go back to Kansas and wait for something else?

I was going back home for a month and be back in civilian life, living at home. Then I would get an opportunity to go somewhere else and I'd jump at it. My goal was to get back on active duty.

So it's 1985 and you're back on active duty. Did they tell you that you were on active duty and then assign you? Is that how it happens?

You receive orders. I received orders about a month in advance or maybe even longer. So I knew I was going to be assigned to Fort Meade. I made arrangements for housing and utility hook-up – just like any other soldier that's being reassigned would do.

Back at Fort Benning is this? No, Fort Meade you said.

Yes – February 3, 1985. And I was on active duty until I retired in 1999. I was at Fort Meade, at First Army headquarters, and I was there from February, 1985 until April, 1988. I was working on personnel there. Pretty much the rest of my Army career was working in personnel. I was an infantry officer, wore the infantry insignia. But I was basically a personnel weenie. That's what I did.

Then, after Fort Meade – you were there until 1988 – then what?

Then I was assigned to St. Louis, Missouri to the records center there. That's where the repository of all military records exists. They have a big facility there that maintains all the files of everybody in the service. It's all on microfiche now.

Otherwise they'd have to have two counties to house it all! And how long were you in St. Louis?

It turned out to be only two years. Normally it would have been a three year assignment. But I had been promoted to major by then and I'd applied for Command and General Staff College. And I received orders to go to CGSC at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas – it's a one-year course. So in August, 1990 I reported to Fort Leavenworth for CGSC and spent roughly a year there.

What do they teach you there? This is a higher order of learning?

Yes. All the services have their equivalent. The Marine Corps has their Command and General Staff College, the Army has theirs, the Navy has theirs, and the Air Force has theirs. And there's a lot of cross-training: the Army's Command and General Staff College has from the sister services they have students and vice-versa. We had Army guys go to the Marine one or the Air Force one. They like to 'cross-pollinate' or whatever you want to call it. We also had attendees from other countries – and there were a lot of them. This is our yearbook [Bill brings out a book to show John]. Just to give you an idea, in the back half are just the students. They always pose with their families, as you can see. Here's a guy from another country.

We had a lot of foreign students there. For instance, mine is here [Bill shows John].

So you're learning a lot more complex things?

Yes. It's been considered like graduate-level schooling. It gives you a ticket getting punched if you're looking to move up. You really can't make full colonel – O6 – if you don't go to Command and General Staff College. They say if you don't get accepted to CGSC you really don't have any chance of being a colonel, just like the war college. They say if you don't get accepted to the war college you'll never make general. So when you get word that you're accepted you figure maybe you have a shot at it. It's not that competitive, but it's a little competitive.

But it tells you where you stand in terms of possibilities.

Yes. And, in my opinion, it was challenging. I didn't expect it to be a piece of cake, but there was a lot of reading and an awful lot of reports. You had to turn in papers and things. I found it – maybe I was getting too comfortable with things – but it was like going back to school.

Did they give you things like tactics?

A little bit of everything.

History?

A lot of that stuff. What it was, the first half of the program – the first six months – everything is mandatory. All the classes, everybody across the board has to take. And the second half of the course, after Christmas, you take electives. You still have to take some of the required courses, but then you can take certain electives and certain things you want to pursue or get into.

What was your elective?

I did a lot of law stuff. At that time I had a bachelor's degree in criminal justice.

Where did you get that from?

WichitaState – I never attended classes on campus, but I was able to take classes through WichitaState while I was in Kansas. I had my associate's degree in police science and my bachelor's degree in criminal justice. So I was kind of looking into the legal field. So I took some of the military law classes. They had military law-related classes. A lot of it would be like if you were a JAG officer – Judge Advocate General Corps – there'd be a possibility of going toward that. But you didn't have to be in the JAG Corps to take them, so I took them.

Actually, I applied them to my masters degree. They were transferable to the college I ultimately got my masters degree from – WebsterUniversity in St. Louis. I had started that while I was at the stint in St. Louis. I'd started taking graduate classes at Webster and was in the legal studies program. You could be a para-legal once you finished it, or it was a stepping stone if you thought you wanted to go to law school. It

would be a good program to get a masters degree and a leg up. So I was able to transfer the credits from CGSC to Webster in that program.

We're in 1990?

1991 is when this happened. The one thing that coincides with my year in CGSC was Desert Storm. I got there and started CGSC in August, 1990 and that's when things started heating up in Kuwait. Saddam Hussein and George Bush, Sr. was President at the time. It was February when it was launched. Desert Shield was the first segment, and Desert Storm was the actual war. It was a short war – only 72 hours or so. But I remember being there (Fort Leavenworth). They had television monitors in all the classrooms. Normally they would have been turned off, but they had them turned on CNN all the time. So we were all glued to what the latest was that was going on.

And there were a lot of people in the course chomping at the bit. They wanted to get out of there and go. They were warriors and had the warrior mentality. They thought this was their opportunity and they were stuck in classrooms. So there were some pretty frustrated people.

Some of the West Point guys – they live and die to be a soldier and be a warrior and they see their opportunity for everything they've studied for and they're stuck in Kansas of all places! It was a real kick.

So now you're out of the program – you've graduated. Now where did you go?

Then I went to Fort McPherson, Georgia which is right in the heart of Atlanta.

What do you did there? I haven't heard of that before.

There's the Army Reserve Command. It was part of FORSCOM. FORSCOM is the Forces Command. It's one of the major commands of the military. Actually, Colin Powell was the commander of FORSCOM at one time. We came under that. We were part of the umbrella – the Reserve Command was. The Army Reserve Command had control of all the Reserve commands in the United States. It used to be that the continental United States was divided by armies: First Army, Second Army, Third Army, Fourth Army and so forth. And they would have responsibility for all the Reserve forces in those geographic areas. It was about that time that it was restructured where they would have one headquarters for those forces, and it was going to be in Atlanta. And I was kind of on the ground floor of that new set up. Again, I was still working in personnel.

I ended up getting assigned to a program and was in charge of it, of incapacitation pay – it was like workman's compensation pay for Reservists. If a Reservist gets hurt on a weekend – when they have their weekend drill – or they get hurt when they have their two weeks of required annual training, they can apply for incapacitation pay. If they meet the requirements, while they are recuperating they get the equivalent of workman's compensation. Unfortunately, there's an awful lot of corruption in the program. There's a certain amount of it. It might initially be legitimate, but it's like the gravy train. And there were cases where somebody might be laid off from their civilian job and that might

be the reason they're applying in the first place. They think because they have payments and bills to pay they can come up with back ailments or sore knee injuries. They still have to get medical confirmation of their injuries, but sometimes they were faking it.

I'm not saying it's widespread, but there were a lot of those kinds of cases. And there are bureaucratic tie-ups and other things. The program is run at the local level up to a certain point, then it came to our headquarters. In other words, if you're living in California or Montana in a Reserve unit, they take care of the first – I don't know how many weeks or months it was – but then if it continued they had to get authorization from us in Atlanta. And I managed the program that took care of those extensions.

How did you find out if they were faking it? Was there any way of really getting at it?

We would just be sticklers that doctors statements were legitimate, and they weren't going to Uncle Joe who happens to be a doctor. They were going to a military doctor, if possible, or a military hospital or veterans clinic – something like that. We just made sure things looked up-front. There was a duty that the commanders – the chain of command – if they had a soldier who had been receiving incapacitation pay for a certain period of time they had to refer them for a military assessment, just for the good of the soldier, just for the good of the government. Just to make sure if we needed to discharge them. Maybe they were never going to be physically capable of continuing their career, so we needed to initiate the paperwork to have them evaluated to see if they needed to get a disability discharge. There were times, I think, that the soldier was dragging their feet or the chain of command were dragging their feet because things were going good the way it was – let Uncle Sam pay for it and all that. But sometimes we would kind of give them the impetus to get it started and get an evaluation made. In those cases they would send the soldier to Walter Reed or some similar facility to be evaluated. So I guess we were kind of Big Brother to be sure things were being done right in a timely manner.

There's a lot of 'good old boy' taking care of their soldiers – letting things go on. I saw a little bit of that. There's a lot of congressional action – when a service person gets upset they usually write to their congressperson and it generates a lot of attention. There were cases like that where we would have to answer congressional complaints that somewhere along the way a soldier was not being treated fairly and see if it was legitimate or if he was being treated properly.

But I did that for the whole time I was at the USAR – U.S. Army Reserve Command. I was there for three years. That was my second longest assignment. I was there from the middle part of 1991 to June, 1994.

Then where? You had twenty years in.

If you add it all up, yes, pretty close to it. But my last assignment – and I knew this probably was going to be my last assignment – was at the Pentagon. I got assigned there in June, 1994.

So you got a desk job again. And that was doing the same kind of thing?

Actually, the majority of the time I was working in the Pentagon I was working in the compensation and entitlements branch. It's an array of things, but incap pay was a big part of it.

Another thing that I worked on that was very satisfying was that they have a thing – and all the services have their own program like this – but in the Army it's called ABCMR: Army Board for the Correction of Military Records.

You probably see on TV or the internet some 90-year-old-guy who served in World War II or the Korean War was denied the Purple Heart or should have gotten some pay but never got it, or should have been recognized for some accomplishment, and the paperwork got lost or somebody did something to mess it up and some family member wants to pursue it. And they find out the guy should have gotten it. It's cases like this we got involved in that took research, going through files, making phone calls and so forth where we would maybe uncover an oversight or inequity that took place.

Out on the battlefield it's awful easy to have things go wrong.

And I can't say I worked in ABCMR, but our office did support for them. We sometimes did the work and it would go to ABCMR and they would make their evaluation. But we, a lot of times, did the research on it.

At the Memorial Day program the Legion has, that I was a speaker for, and I was talking about what I did at the Pentagon, one of the things I talked about that I was involved in for ABCMR was when Bob Dole ran for President in 1996 I was stationed there. Somebody was questioning whether or not he really had a legitimate injury from World War II. If you ever saw, he would always shake hands with his left hand because his right one was mangled. Somebody was doing a freedom of information request about his injuries, and whether or not he was receiving disability payments, and whether or not those disability payments were correct or if he was milking it or getting too much. So I complied and looked through some files and everything was legitimate.

It would be pretty hard to go through public life and fake that.

But we also had cases where maybe a guy's last paycheck was lost and they never got it. We'd find out that it was never dispatched or sent out from the finance office. And it was satisfying to fix that – to bring joy to some family where something was never resolved.

Did you have to deal with death on the battlefield?

Not in my office. There were other offices that dealt with that. Mine was more in the financial end of things. The major office was Resources Division, and I was in an office under Resources Division called 'Compensation and Entitlements Branch.' It had to fall into our little portion of the world.

And that takes you all the way up to the time you got out of the service?

1999. And I had made Lieutenant Colonel while I was at the Pentagon. I made it in 1996 [when] I think I got promoted.

So you left in 1999 and came back to the Midwest?

Yes. I grew up in central Wisconsin, which is where my family still lives. And I wanted to come back to my home state, but not necessarily to my hometown again. And my wife is from Connecticut, so she didn't have any ties in Wisconsin. We chose Green Bay as a good area. We had property here on Washington Island.

How did that come about?

That goes way back to the 1960's when I visited a couple of times.

You came up with your family?

Do you know the Helene's – he used to be the pastor at Trinity. He was there from the late 1950's until 1963, I think.

We came up in 1962.

Right about that time they were still here. After they left the Island they went back to central Wisconsin where...[I was] from. They were friends with my parents – real good friends; we were real close, the pastor and his family. They had a soft spot in their heart for the Island after living here for a while, and they kept a cottage up here on the Island. They brought us up here a couple of times to their cottage. I thought it was pretty nice, and I was a kid at the time. I just kind of kept it in the back of my mind that it was a nice place.

When I became an adult I brought my wife up here. We started coming up just to visit once in a while. Then in the 1980's we bought a piece of property. Our intentions were someday to build and retire up here. A lot of things have changed, but I'm up here now.

In 1999, when I retired – the summer of 1999 – we moved to Green Bay. We bought a place outside of Green Bay, out in the country, and that's ...

So now you're going to build on Hemlock.

Yes, as soon as I can. That's my dream.

Thanks for spending time with us. We mentioned you're Commander of the Post. Is that a one-year or two-year?

I'm not even sure!

Until you get tired of doing it! Thanks, Bill. I appreciate the time you've spent with us here. We'll sign off now.