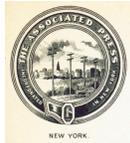

From: Paul Stevens [stevenspl@live.com]
Sent: Tuesday, November 11, 2014 8:33 AM
To: stevenspl@live.com
Subject: Connecting - November 11, 2014

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Connecting

November 11, 2014

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Connecting salutes our veterans



Colleagues,

Good Tuesday morning!

And to all my fellow veterans on Connecting, Happy Veterans Day!

Thank you for your service!

This special edition of Connecting lists those of you who let me know of your military service. Some of you also shared memories, and a few also sent along photos of you in uniform.

If you "missed the memo" and are a veteran who is not listed here, send along your service information and favorite memories, and a photo, and I will do a follow to this on Wednesday morning. No veteran will be left out - as long as I am made aware of your service.



All the best,

Paul Stevens, U.S. Air Force, 1968-72

Connecting veterans

Hank Ackerman [\(Email\)](#)

I served 1965-1967 as 1st Lieutenant, U.S. Army Signal Corps in Panama Canal Zone and South America, as Operations Officer, U.S. Strategic Communications Command -South.

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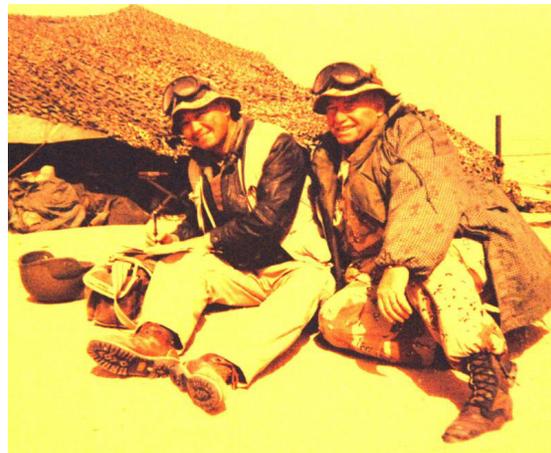
Jim Bagby [\(Email\)](#)

Served in U.S. Army 1967-69. Basic at Fort Polk, La; trained in artillery fire direction control at Fort Sill in Lawton, Okla., then spent most of career with 97th Army Band there, also served as company clerk; discharged as Spec. 5.

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Ed Bailey [\(Email\)](#)

1-1/2 yrs PA National Guard, Ambulance Co '53-54...3 yrs Army 14th Inf. Reg. 25th Div. Scofield Barracks, Div. Bandsman then 14th Reg. photographer, PIO NCOIC '54-57....20yr break than 17yrs USNR-R..Atlantic Fleet AVU 193 Navy Motion Picture Combat Camera Unit '76-94 at Floyd Bennett Field NY and Willow Grove Naval Air Station, PA. Active combat duty in Beirut, Lebanon and six months in the Gulf War on special assignment for the Secretary Navy via CHINFO shooting Video "Hi Mom's" on 5



ships in the Red sea and two in the Gulf and across the desert covering President Bush, Gen. Schwarzkoph, Sea Bees, Marines, and Army. "Hi Mom's" were for home town TV release sent via Fed. Ex..to DC. then with the Marines on the attack into Kuwait. We where a two man team, a J.G. from Mutual of Omaha TV and me CWO Photo Officer. on leave from AP giving some HO's to Bob form DC..Two most funny things; Gen Schwarzkoph asked me on Thanksgiving in the desert "what the Navy was doing in the desert " ? I said "the Sec. Nav sent me over to make you famous , don't get your turkey until I get my weapon loaded(both of my still cameras were out of film and was re-loading at the time) He walked on in the chow line and when the cook went to give him his turkey he held back his tray and said "Don't give me my bird until the Navy gets their weapon loaded" ..??. marine photog some distant away shot the Gen. When I got back shopping at Marine Hq in DC an 11x14 print of the Gen holding back his tray was posted, but no sound.....First .AM after the liberation of Kuwait I bunked in a 'shut down' hotel with the AP shooters & I was on the floor by the door and Eddie Adams came in the dark of night, accidentally kicked my foot and I almost shot him with my 45 I had under my pillow. CHINFO..in the Pentagon sent us out in Nov. during Desert Shield with only our

khakis and no web gear or body armor, we had to com- shore everything, gas mask, pistol etc...but they did give us each \$5,000. in travel checks. A lot of money in the Sahara Desert.

(Photo shows Ed, at right, with AP Japan staffer)

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Mercer Bailey [\(Email\)](#)

I was inducted in 1945 and discharged in 1947. I served in Japan as an agent of the Army's 44th Criminal Investigation Detachment, based in Yokohama. The CID was the detective side of the Military Police. Rank: Staff Sergeant.

I was surprised by the friendliness of the Japanese people. One in particular, a photographer with the Yokohama police department named Murikamisan. He took me and my partner all over the place. Once to a school near Mt. Fujiyama dedicated to training young girls in the fine art of the formal tea service. And another time he coaxed me into participating in a 200-yard dash during a Japanese track meet. I actually finished third, but the official scorer disqualified the two Japanese runners ahead of me and over my protests presented me with the first prize: a wooden water pail. I gave the pail to Murikamisan.

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Brian Bland [\(Email\)](#)

My active duty with the Army was 1964-1968, as a Signal Corps officer.

My memories are of two years with a Mobile TV outfit in the states, followed by a year in Vietnam.



The Mobile TV Detachment's HQ was in Long Island City, NY, at the site of what is now the Museum of the Moving Image (it was a beat-up old sound stage and offices back then). It was a great introduction to New York, but a challenge to enjoy on a Second Lieutenant's salary. The HQ later moved to Tobyhanna, PA. I became a production officer (producer), traveling with crews in small convoys to locations as diverse as Washington, D.C., the Infantry School at Ft. Benning, GA., and Dugway Proving Ground in the Utah desert - in the summer - to videotape goats being killed by nerve gas from exploding artillery shells. The heat and stress (heart attacks) killed more goats than the gas.

When my two-year active duty obligation ended, I "extended" for another year and volunteered for Vietnam. I spent Feb. 1967-Feb. 1968 running the Combat Photo Detachment of the 25th Infantry Division in Cu Chi, famous for its incredible tunnel system that's now a tourist attraction. The base camp was large, and a frequent target of VC rockets and mortars, as was a base at Dau Tiang, where I spent six weeks.

Unknown to me then, a teenage Nick Ut was working in the area, already a year into his incredible career. We wound up in the L.A. bureau together for nearly 28 years, 1979-2006.

About three weeks before I returned to the states, the VC gave me a send-off party called Tet. I was still able to catch my plane on 20 February 1968 with a fresh Bronze Star (for meritorious service, NOT valor!). I left the Army as a Captain.

My hootchmate, Jan Doxey, a very bright and talented lieutenant, was killed two days later by a rocket. He had given up a college music scholarship to go to OCS and had turned 20 a few months before his death.

Thank you, fellow veterans.

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Hal Buell ([Email](#))

I accept Richard Pyle's challenge regarding my US Army service in Japan.

Like Richard, I volunteered for the draft. Nobody would hire a beginner whose military service was not completed. So I joined a reserve unit with a pal from Northwestern, and we requested active duty within six weeks of graduation.

But Richard wrong saying a photographer's life in Japan was cushy. He vastly understates the cushy nature of the assignment. Billeted in the heart of Tokyo, we lived in the former barracks of the Japanese Imperial Guard. Night life outside the gate abounded. We worked as photographers in the largest oversea signal corps photo unit - still and film - connected to the huge Signal Corps photo unit in Astoria, Long Island, New York.

Life was so cushy that were I a politician I could not in honesty say I served in the military.

Before Japan I went to photo school at Fort Monmouth, NJ, after teaching photography during my graduate year at Northwestern. That was pretty cushy, too.

Two important influences marked that period of my life. I fell in love with Japan, and I fell in love with AP.

Each night, from 6pm to 10pm, three of us from S&S shared a half trick at AP, polishing up copy from Southeast Asia, Kyodo's English language report and copy taken in from North Korean Radio. The North Korean copy was sent in Morse code and a Japanese staffer who understood the dot-dash-dot of code but not English typed out the stories a letter at a time, and passed it over for handling. I was with AP about year in that trick and worked with such great staffers as Murray Fromson, Gene Kramer, John Randolph, Forest (Woody) Edwards, John Roderick. George Sweers was the photo boss, and Bob Eunson was Chief of Bureau. I vowed that one day I would return to Japan with AP.



Meanwhile Army assignments kept me busy during the day....Honest John rocket (first nuclear capable) firing in Hokkaido, US Airmen coming home from China after Korea, six weeks in Taipei setting up a lab for the MAAG and shooting portraits of Chinese generals at cocktail parties. Had my own jeep and Chinese Army driver.

One story lingers on after all these years. Shelly Silverstein, the great artist, book writer and general culture icon and at the time an S&S cartoonist, and I were out one night enjoying a beer in a Shibuya saloon. As we headed for the taxi line well after curfew, we saw two MPs walking toward us. Shelly said, "Don't say a word!" And he rattled off a story, which I never did get, in fluent French. I just nodded as appropriate...or what I thought was appropriate. The MPs eyed us. We smiled and continued on our way...as did they.

I missed the fun of a stormy Pacific crossing that Richard describes. With 1500 troops aboard the SS Mann, we made a smooth as glass ride both ways. I tried to work on the ship's mimeographed newspaper but ended up monitoring the refrigerator that held milk formulas for family's also riding the Mann.

Like Richard I was discharged at Fort Sheridan after a four day train ride from Oakland to Chicago. Six weeks later I was working at AP Chicago, mostly Illinois splits on the radio desk, then NY photo for three years and finally back to Japan as Asia Photo Editor for four years.

I cannot say I liked the Army (I was not a good soldier) but to be fair, it was a valuable experience...respect for authority, a kind of patriotism, discipline in work. I would not do it again for \$1,000,000...but I wouldn't take \$1,000,000 for the experience. And more importantly I was introduced to Japan and to AP. Wouldn't change that for \$1,000,000 either.

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Rick Cooper ([Email](#))

U.S. Army. 1968-1972, Vietnam Service. When I returned from Vietnam I was assigned to Ft. Hood. I called the detailing officer in the Pentagon responsible for assigning officers of my rank and branch asking, "I just completed a foreign tour of duty and had been told that I wouldn't have to serve another one for at least 24 months. Why have I been sent to Texas."

Happy Veterans Day.

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John Epperson ([Email](#))

USAF, Strategic Air Command, a reconnaissance squadron attached to HQ 15th Air Force. Was on base honor guard team as well, for base ceremonies, funeral services, etc.

Also, next Tuesday, Nov. 11th is the 48th anniversary of my entry into USAF, arrived about 3am at Lackland AFB, Texas, after four separate flights, from swearing in ceremony in NA the afternoon before. Being a federal holiday everything was shut down at Lackland with exception of chow halls and the base infirmary. So first day in service we started at overnight chow hall with huge breakfast about 4am and about 630am some airman in fatigue uniform came into the open bay barracks banging a trash can to get us up to march us, (though we had never marched before), to chow hall for breakfast again. Didn't care when we explained we had breakfast, he marched us back for more, came again at noon, and about 530pm. That...was day one.....only 1459 to go !!!

There would prove to be some quite interesting days ahead. Cold war days.....I would not trade the experience, or the memories of taking a part in history really, wouldn't trade those days for anything.

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Claude Erbsen ([Email](#))

In the spring of 1962, on military leave from AP, and freshly out of OCS, I was assigned to the staff of the Navy's Chief of Information at the Pentagon. With my still blindingly

shiny (and lonely) Ensign's stripe, I was walking down a Pentagon corridor one day, followed by a gaggle of three- and four-star Admirals. People pointed at the constellation of bright stars when the group stopped, and one of them -- I later found out it was the Deputy Chief of Naval Operations -- turned toward the gawkers and said "Don't look at us. We are a dime a dozen. Look at him! He's the only one in the building." And I was indeed the most junior officer in the Pentagon. A dubious distinction at best.

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Steve Graham ([Email](#))

USMC (aviation) 1957-1961 (well before Vietnam). The closest I came to combat was getting my friends back to base after a late night on the beach. ;-}

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Denis Gray ([Email](#))

Commissioned after ROTC at Yale University, served 1969-71, in military intelligence units in Japan and Vietnam. Had about two years of U.S. Army Reserve service.

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Paul Harrington ([Email](#))

I did 21.5 years in the United States Air Force flying in aircraft build by the lowest bidder. 1960 to 62 at March Field outside of Riverside California with a reconnaissance outfit. Then to Morocco and SAC HQ outside of Omaha until early 1966. When Kennedy was killed, I spent 12-16 hours in the SAC command post. For a few months in 65 I was with a classified operating in Saigon. Back to Saigon for a year in 1966. Then up to Yokota air base outside of Tokyo expecting to go to Stars&Stripes but ended up at Yokota.

In 1969 I was back with 7th Air Force combat news as a photog until 1970 then back to Tokyo. This time too Stripes. Got a bronze star and a Vietnamese Air Force medal or two plus a few air medals. Nothing serious. There until 1974 when the Air Force decided that need I some refining and send me to Syracuse University for the Military Photojournalism course for a year. Next stop in 75 was the Air Force's photojournalism/combat photo section at Norton AFB from where I retired from in 1981.

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Larry Hamlin ([Email](#))

I served in the US Army, Signal Corps, from December 1965 - November 1968.

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Charles Hanley ([Email](#))

U.S. Army, 1969-70, military journalist, Fort Jackson, S.C., and Vietnam. Best job: Weekly advice columnist for the troops in Vietnam. Regrettably the top brass never sought this Spec. 4's counsel on an earlier exit strategy.

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Lindel Hutson ([Email](#))

I was drafted in 1969 as soon as I graduated from college. I spent time at Fort Polk, LA; Indiantown Gap, PA, and Fort Dix, NJ where I was sports editor of the post newspaper. My last year was spent with NATO/SHAPE in Belgium where I put out a weekly paper for American personnel in Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands.

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Jerry Jackson ([Email](#))



I am a Vietnam vet. Started my naval career in Pensacola, FL at AOCS school July 1, 1966. Got commissioned and my wings as a Naval Flight Officer and was stationed at North Island Naval Air Station, Coronado, CA flying in the E2 aircraft. I had two WESTPAC cruises to Southeast Asia and the Gulf of Tonkin flying with VAW 116 aboard the carrier USS Coral Sea (CVA 43). Left the Navy in Apr '73, and joined the Naval Reserve program until my retirement in '94 as a Navy Captain.

I have lots of great memories of the Navy, being at sea and flying aboard the Coral Sea. I am happy to have served, and happy to have completed over 300 carrier landings. As far as memories, there is

nothing like observing flight ops aboard a carrier. Launch and recovery of aircraft aboard a carrier is truly fascinating, and even today when I see this operation on the nightly news, etc., it makes me proud to think that I was once a part of this great military operation the US has today.

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Bill Kaczor ([Email](#))

I was in the Air Force from January 1969 through December 1972. In essence I was a draft dodger. After graduating from Eastern Illinois University in 1968 in the midst of the Vietnam War, I enlisted in the Air Force. I did so at the suggestion of an Army recruiter who used the term "cannon fodder" to describe the option of becoming an officer in his service. With the draft board nipping at my heels I managed to get in a summer as a graduate student at Northwestern's Medill School of Journalism, later completing my master's after getting out of the Air Force.

Graduate deferments ended that year, but the Air Force had granted me a delayed enlistment. The Air Force also guaranteed I would be assigned to one of my top three training choices. I chose public affairs as my top selection but got my second choice, intelligence. Only after arriving at basic training did I find out I was ticketed for language training, but only if I could pass a test for aptitude in that field. With visions of a one-way ticket to Vietnam in my mind, I made sure I failed that test.

I then was sent to see a sergeant with more stripes than I'd ever seen before. He was in charge of finding round holes into which he placed square pegs such as myself. He said my other test scores were high enough so I could pick anything. Again, I chose public affairs. He then corrected himself, saying I could choose anything except public affairs because that's where they were putting women.

I fell back on my third option - weather. The guy with all the stripes said he had something even better, weather equipment repair. There was a long school and it was back in Illinois. I said "Sign me up." Upon arriving at Chanute Air Force Base I found out a lot of other people also liked weather equipment repair. I spent a couple months as an errand boy and floor polisher because every time a class began I would be bumped by a former bomb loader returning from the war in search of a new career field as there wasn't much need for bomb loaders stateside. The base general signed off on a transfer to his public affairs office, but Air Force headquarters rejected the move, saying it would send him a newly minted second lieutenant to fill that vacancy.

Finally, I got orders to report instead for "bomb/nav" training, also at Chanute, along with a couple other guys who were in the same situation. Our concern about being so closely involved with bombs was obvious to the desk sergeant at our new squadron. He told us to relax because the full title of our new career field was "bomb/nav flight simulator." So I spent the remainder of my Air Force career playing elaborate video games on F-4 flight simulators as I helped train pilots and navigators, who did the actual bomb dropping, at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla. I started as an airman and eventually attained the rank of sergeant. The job also left me plenty of time to moonlight at The Playground Daily News (now Northwest Florida Daily News) and later the Pensacola News Journal.

That eventually led to my 33-year AP career including 21 years as Pensacola correspondent, where much of my work was devoted to covering the military I had once tried to dodge.

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Brent Kallestad ([Email](#))

Left my hometown in South Dakota on Easter Sunday of 1966 for Navy boot camp in San Diego (77 memorable days) before being assigned to the USS Charles Berry (DE-1035) based at Pearl Harbor for the next 19 months.

In February 1968 I transferred to an Army post, Fort Benjamin Harrison, Ind., for an eight-week Basic Military Journalism course followed by a five-week Broadcast Specialist course at DINFOS. Actually saw my first Indy 500 year that May as well as some great high school basketball earlier in the spring (George McGinnis was playing in high school at the time there.) Loved Indy BTW.

When I returned to the states, there were two things I couldn't wait to get back into my routine: The CBS Evening News with guys like Cronkite, Seavareid, Trout, Collingwood, Pierpoint, etc.) and Johnny Carson's monologue.

It was at Indianapolis where I was awakened twice in my rack to be told about the Martin Luther King assassination and then two months later Robert Kennedy. It was a difficult year to say the least and that was before Chicago and the Democratic convention.

Onward to NAS Jacksonville for my final 22 months in the Navy and during nearly all of that time I enjoyed a full-time position in the sports department at the Florida Times-Union during off-duty hours. Hubert Mizell, who went on to the AP and then the St. Petersburg Times for a long time, was a colleague there briefly before moving on to AP Miami. The sports editor, Bill Kastelz, had known Ben Brown in the 1950s (Ben was at Florida State) and he was the reference that possibly persuaded Ben to hire me for my first job in AP at Sioux Falls. BTW, Jacksonville reached the NCAA finals in 1970 behind Artis Gilmore and Co.

Also met my ex and mother of our four children during the stay in Jacksonville. I was incredibly lucky as an enlisted Navy Journalist to have spent my career out of harms' way during an awful time in our history.

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Doug Kienitz ([Email](#))

Doug Kienitz-Commander, U.S. Navy (Retired), 26 years. As a young Navy ensign and navigator, I was on my third monthly 16-day deployment to Midway Island in 1963. Our flight crew was a part of the Airborne Early Warning squadron from Barbers Point Naval Air Station in Hawaii. Each flight of 14 hours flew a

track from Midway to the Aleutian Islands and back. An EC-121K (known lovingly as the Willie Victor) and fresh crew would launch every four hours around-the-clock. This was prior to satellites taking over the mission from space-checking for any possible incoming Russian bombers heading toward Hawaii and the USA.

On this particular day and midway through our long flight, our radioman reported that President Kennedy had been shot. Within a couple hours, our crew received word that he had died. A hush developed over the flight crew, knowing we were on the western frontier with Russia in the Cold War days. The guys on the radar screens became ever more vigilant in watching for anything that may be flying toward the mainland. We landed without any issues but realized that we still had three more flights before returning to Hawaii. Of course, this was in the days prior to satellite delivery of television; thus our updates were slow in coming to the Navy installation on Midway.

That November 23, 1963, date and the 14.1-hour flight aboard Willie Victor No. 143200 is etched in my memory forever.

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Raymond Krell ([Email](#))

U.S. Air Force

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Jim Limbach ([Email](#))

U.S Army 1965-68. American Forces Korea Network 65-66. Chemical, Biological, Radiological Weapons Orientation School 67-68.

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David Lubeski ([Email](#))

Being a Vietnam Era veteran was not high on the popularity scale. Veterans of more recent conflicts are lauded as heroes for serving their country and helping to keep us all free. There wasn't much love for those of us in uniform back then. My military experience was by request. I received my draft notice just before Christmas of 1966 and took the oath and mandatory step forward in early January 1967 at the induction center in Houston where Muhammad Ali refused to do so almost four months later.

After basic training at Ft. Polk, Louisiana, I was trained to be a combat medic at the Army's Medical Training Center in Ft. Sam Houston in San Antonio. To my amazement my permanent assignment orders were to report to the 2nd Battalion 13th Infantry in Mannheim, Germany.

On leave between medic training and reporting to my duty station I managed to come down with pneumonia. I made it to my unit and reported immediately to sick call and ended up in the military hospital in Heidelberg for 17 days. My commanding officer, Col. Thomas Blake, visited me and when I wrote to tell my mom about it she thought I had hallucinated because of high fever. "Are you sure about that?" she wrote back. "Colonels don't usually visit privates."

More than 40 years later I was reunited with Col. Blake at an army reunion in Branson. We still stay in touch. I spoke with him recently to wish him a happy 90th birthday.



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Bill McCloskey [\(Email\)](#)

I was drafted immediately after graduating Villanova University in 1966 and shipped to Fort Jackson, S.C., a miserably hot place to do basic training in the summertime. We found we were the first class to not get a two-week leave at the end of basic and since the previous class was returning from their post-basic leave, so they had twice as many recruits to find something to do with. Some of us -- mostly the college grads -- skipped Advance Training and were assigned to various duties around the post -- I became a clerk/typist. At that time, they would not ship you overseas if you had less than 12 months left on your tour, and I almost typed my way to that threshold.

Having been a college broadcaster and with five years of interning at AP member station WIP in Philadelphia, when I got my orders to go to Vietnam to be a clerk/typist in Can Tho in the Delta, I sent a resume and an audition tape to the top enlisted guy at Armed Forces Radio Vietnam SGM Don Cosgrove. He must have liked what he heard, because I later learned that he tried to requisition me from the Signal Brigade to which I was assigned, but instead the Signal Brigade changed my assignment from clerk/typist in the Delta to Information Specialist in Saigon. PIOs got official press cards which was good for a free ride on any military aircraft and got you into the Military Assistance Command Vietnam daily 5 p.m. press conferences, known as the "5 O'clock Follies." My fellow PIO

Alan Dawson (who would go on to be UPI's last Saigon Bureau Chief) and I would attend all the time and occasionally hung out at the nearby UPI bureau (the AP bureau wasn't as welcoming). We tried to avoid the shooting by going north when we heard there was heavy combat in the south and vice versa. All's well that ends, I say, and in April 1968, I took off on a Continental jet headed Stateside. Continental generously served us a meal of hot dogs. I was soon back at WIP and then was quickly assigned to sister station WASH-FM in Washington, where I met Burl Osborne and the wonder Marvin Arrowsmith who coaxed me into joining APR in 1975.

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Joe McGowan [Email](#)

I had two years active duty with the U.S. Navy during the Korean War (1953-55) and 15 years in the U.S. Naval Reserve. I went through the enlisted ranks to Yeoman 2nd, then got a direct commission and went from Ensign to LTjg and then LT. I would like to say I saw combat, but I was on a training ship based in Milwaukee, Wis., for those two years. We took reservists on board for two weeks at a time during the summer months and were tied to the dock for the winters. It was ROUGH duty. There was a USO with coeds from Marquette University, and the breweries had free beer for men in uniform.

One time the reservist commander of our 5-ship squadron took us into a bay on the Michigan side of Lake Michigan so we could put small boats in the water and exchange mail and movies. While we were anchored, shells began landing in the water all around us. The commander had not looked at the charts to see this was a firing range area for the Michigan National Guard. Fortunately, no damage or injuries.

The combat I saw was later with the AP, being shot at in Panama and being with a Pakistani army convoy in 1965 when the Indian Air Force attacked, bombing and strafing.

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Joe McKnight [Email](#)

Enlisted in U. S. Army Air Corps April 13, 1943, age 17 years, at Selma, Ala., Called to active duty two weeks after 18th birthday Sept. 6, 1943 Keesler Army Air Base, Biloxi, MS., followed by transfers to eight or nine stations in six or seven states over two years; boarded troop ship at San Francisco, Sept 2, 1945, arrived Manila, P.I., Sept. 30, 1945, transferred to Clark Army Air Base radio station, Transferred to Nichols Field, Manila Feb. 15, 1946, Sailed March 1, arrived San Francisco March 15, Discharged at a military base in Mississippi March 28, 1946 (my Mom's 44th birthday). In 1951, enlisted in Adjutant General's Corps, 2nd Lt., inactive reserve at Atlanta, GA. Discharged in 1953.

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Reid Miller [Email](#)

I served in the Army Security Agency from 1952 to 1955, including 18 months in Korea.

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Richard Pyle ([Email](#))

Sp3 Richard Pyle US55498447
HQ, A Co, Signal Overseas Communications Bn
8235th Army Unit, APO 500
Tokyo Japan

I was assigned to this Signal Corps unit as company clerk from Feb 1955 to July 1956. Facing a two-year military obligation still in effect after the Korean war, and in danger of flunking out of summer school, I volunteered for the draft, went through basic at Fort Leonard Wood, MO, in late 1954 and was sent to Japan. Possible assignments included Korea or Alaska, but fortunately, the day our group processed at Ft Lewis WA, all orders for clerk-typists were marked ``J."

First night out of Tacoma, our WW2-vintage troopship USNS Gen John Pope had barely cleared San Juan de Fuca strait when a soldier fell down a stairwell and suffered a skull fracture. There being no helicopter evac then, the ship altered course for stability to permit emergency surgery, which took us on a more northerly trajectory in February's heavy seas.

The wintry 17-day voyage was right out of the WW2 documentary ``Victory at Sea," with huge waves crashing over the bow as we huddled miserably on deck. At night, a squawk box next to my bunk bleated "Now hear this" every few minutes and the hull shuddered whenever the screws lifted out of the water. Among 3,434 GIs aboard, I was among the few who did not get seasick.

On that northerly route we saw no other ships or other evidence of human existence. And like the Ancient Mariner, we all rejoiced one day at the sight of an albatross, a sure sign that we were nearing land.

Debarking at Yokohama, we went by train to Camp Drake near Tokyo, affording our first view of wrecked factories and empty land where a crowded city had stood a decade earlier.

At Camp Drake, my luck held. When assigned to Co A in Roppongi, I asked the clerk where and what that was. ``It's in the middle of Tokyo, plenty of bars and broads," he said.

It turned out to be Hardy Barracks, a former headquarters for Japan's imperial palace guards and now home to my unit, plus the 519th MP battalion, the military newspaper Pacific Stars and Stripes, an Army PsyWar unit and a Japanese tailor shop favored by senior US military brass.

Down a nearby alley, I would learn, was the German restaurant where during WW2, Richard Sorge, a German reporter doubling as Soviet master spy, had hung out when he wasn't feeding Japan's vital secrets to Moscow.

As part of the Signal Corps operation for Far East Command Hqs, CO A troops were mostly code clerks with secret clearances and required to live sequestered from others. We also had a large photography section whose members traveled around Asia taking pictures - maybe the cushiest job in the Army.*

Already harboring journalistic ambitions despite an abysmal lack of experience, I applied for a tryout at Stars and Stripes, and surprised myself by actually passing the test. Stripes' civilian editor, Gene Miller, said he would take me on, but warned he could do nothing to help me get a transfer from my unit.

That's where my luck ran out. I don't recall the name of A Co's First Sgt, a leathery "lifer" from Texas, but I remember his words. He didn't like draftees' "general attitude" toward the army, and after reading my letter requesting a transfer, he also said he wasn't interested in breaking in a new company clerk, and ripped the letter to pieces. I thought my news career had ended before it started.

In retrospect, I regard my decision to volunteer for the draft as the smartest in my young life. The two years in uniform was an education and formative experience unto itself, providing an understanding of the hierarchical subculture that defends American democracy and a serious appreciation of those who make it a profession.

Knowing the "military mentality," its rationale and its lingo, would serve well in a later career covering six wars for AP, when, in the absence of required service, most young reporters came to the job without military experience or even basic knowledge. I wondered how many had ever read "From Here to Eternity," or seen the movie.

When I returned to Tokyo in 1979 as AP's Asia News Editor, Roppongi was still pulsating with nightlife, and Hardy Barracks looked the same, but had taken on a new existence as Tokyo University's Institute for the Study of the Properties of Matter.

** For a more authoritative judgment on the "cushiest job in the Army " I respectfully defer to my good friend and former AP colleague Hal Buell, whom I first met in 1956 when he transferred from Stars and Stripes to the Co A photo section. Thanks (probably) to a friendly clerk at Camp Drake, we missed the sea voyage home - choosing instead to fly back to the States on a Navy aircraft with a three-day stopover in Hawaii, and mustered out at Fort Sheridan in Chicago. Hal, of course, went on to become AP's chief of photos for many years, and by eerie coincidence we are meeting today, Veterans Day, November 11, at the Skylight diner in Manhattan.*

"Old soldiers never die, they just swap stories over lunch."

Paul Stevens ([Email](#))

U.S. Air Force, 1968-72, with assignments at Little Rock AFB, which was first a SAC base (B-58s, Titan II missiles) and then a TAC base (C-130s), and at TAC Headquarters, Langley AFB in Newport News, Virginia. At Little Rock, edited the base newspaper, The Air Scoop, with another who would later join the AP, **Robert Lee Zimmer**. Bob and his wife Lynda, then a reporter for the Arkansas Democrat, became lifelong friends. Bob was Champaign correspondent for AP when he died suddenly in 1992.



At Langley, was editor of the TAC News Service feeding a dozen base newspapers in the command - harbinger of things to come?

I still stay in touch with a few people who I worked with at both bases and feel good about serving my country.

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John Strachan ([Email](#))

U.S. Army, 1967-70. 9th Infantry Division, Vietnam, 1968-69. All in all, it could have been worse. I spent the first five months in the field as a battalion correspondent and photographer with the 9th Division before getting moved up to division headquarters to help edit the weekly newspaper. Like a lot of the units in Vietnam, the 9th Division paper was published by Pacific Stars and Stripes in Tokyo. I was assigned there on temporary duty to oversee production of our paper and take advantage of every possible opportunity to write for Stars and Stripes.

That great assignment was cut short when Richard Nixon began pulling troops out of Vietnam in the summer of '69. I qualified for the first group to return to the states, cutting nearly two months off a one-year tour.

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Mike Tharp ([Email](#))

The time I wore an Army uniform as a drafted EM - 1969-70 - changed me forever. I spent 13 months in Vietnam, working for a full-bird Adjutant General and reporting stories for 'Hurricane,' a glossy army monthly. Tried and tried for Stars & Stripes, but the colonel wouldn't let me transfer.

Still got to see a lot of III Corps and wrote some WHAM (winning hearts and mind) stories.

II Field Force, the Plantation, was mostly REMF, but we got rockets and mortars too much for short-timers. First time I came under small arms fire, I peed my pants.

Made it through and got the Honorable Discharge and a Bronze Star (sans 'V').

The war also forced me into a mindset that these suckers need to be covered by folks who can swim in the deep end of the pool.

After witnessing a minor gunfight between the Brits and Guats over Belize, I volunteered, in order, to cover the Persian Gulf War, Somalia, Bosnia, Albania/Kosovo, all for US News. As executive editor for McClatchy's Merced Sun-Star, I spent two six-week tours in Iraq in 2008-09. Embedded with 10th Mountain and 1st Infantry. Still carry prayer beads from Karbala handed to me by an Iraqi reporter.

After Action Report? Made some friends for life. Reinforced the belief from Nam that war brings out our best and worst.

In the end, it don't mean nothin'.

But it needs to be covered right.

--Mike Tharp, E-5

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Bud Weydert ([Email](#))

Active duty from October 1965 - April 1970. US Navy, Submarine Service. Final rank was RM2(SS) or in more general terms, E5. Based in the Pacific area for the duration. Served on both diesel and nuclear submarines. First was the USS Bonefish (SS582), the last diesel submarine built for the US Navy, and the USS Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo (SSBN658), a nuclear submarine that carried Polaris missiles. Longest deployment outside the US was 7 months. Longest period submerged was 66 days without surfacing. Interestingly, both were while I was assigned to the diesel submarine.



Below is a copy of a photo that was taken just prior to departing on my 5th, and final, patrol aboard the USS MG Vallejo SSBN658. Shortly after its conclusion I was transferred from Honolulu, Hawaii to Treasure Island in California where I was honorably discharged in April of 1970. Coincidentally, the name of the officer who signed my enlistment papers was the same as the one who signed my discharge papers.

Can't say for certain that it was the same person, however, I believe it was.



Paul Stevens
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