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A DAILY JOURNAL PUBLICATION



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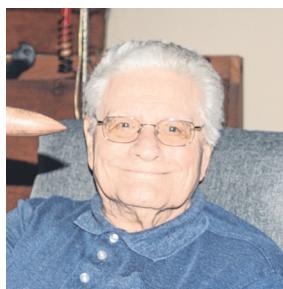


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SALUTE

A DAILY JOURNAL
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MAY 28, 2022

On the cover: Air Force veteran Jay Collars displays a drawing of the aircraft he served on during the Vietnam War.

Photo by Warrie Dennis



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Paid for and authorized by the Johnson County Democratic Party, Amanda Stevenson-Holmes, chair.





ROBERT BENNETT

AGE: 98

BIRTHPLACE/HOMETOWN: Iowa

YEARS OF SERVICE: 1942-45

BRANCH OF SERVICE: U.S. Army Air Force

ASSIGNED UNIT: 387th Bombardment Group/
Medium AAF

DUTIES: HQ switchboard

RANK ATTAINED: Private First Class

MILITARY HONORS: Six Bronze Stars

Family: Wife, Dagrum; children, John, Dag and Susie; six grandchildren

Using models, Robert Bennett of Franklin demonstrates how an American B-26 could knock a German V-1 off course.

IN-35107625

This park is home to many monuments honoring our beloved military heroes, past and present. As you stroll through this 11-acre park you will find memorials to both our WWII and Korean War veterans. The Hoosier Hero Wall lists the names of all of the Indiana lives lost during the Iraqi wars while the Vietnam Memorial carries more than 1,500 names of Indiana soldiers who last their lives while serving in that conflict.

In this park you will also find shelter houses, playgrounds, a walking trail and a catch and release pond. As we celebrate this memorial weekend may we never forget the high price of freedom.

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STORY AND PHOTOS BY AMY MAY

Private Robert Bennett was operating the switchboard for the 387th Bomb Group in England on June 13, 1944, about a week after D-Day when he got a rather concerning call.

"I got a call from London on my switchboard. The Brit said he had just seen a strange looking aircraft and it's heading toward your base," Bennett said.

His base was near Chipping Ongar, about 20 miles northeast of London, where the B-26 Marauder medium bombers and their crews were based.

"I kept track of it and saw it was heading for us. I ran outside and could

see it coming, but I knew it would miss us by a half a mile. It was extremely loud and left a red tail."

"It" was a German V-weapon, an unmanned rudimentary drone that carried a missile. The V-1, which Bennett saw, looked like a small model airplane. It was launched with enough fuel to get to its destination, then designed to run out, hit the ground and detonate.

"It was a drone. They launched them from Pas-de-Calais (France), 20 to 30 miles from London, calculated to run out of fuel," Bennett said. "They send thousands, all aimed at London, hoping to weaken the English for the

anticipated invasion of England," Bennett said.

After they did the V-1, next they did the V-2 rocket, he said.

The V-2 looked like a child's model rocket. Bennett said unlike the V-1, the V-2 was silent. It was 12 feet tall with a 1-ton warhead and could fire to 65,000 feet.

V-weapons, known in original German as Vergeltungswaffen, "retaliatory weapons" or "reprisal weapons," were long-range artillery weapons designed for strategic bombing during World War II, particularly of cities and villages, according to a Wikipedia entry. They

were part of the range of the so-called Wunderwaffen (superweapons or "wonderweapons") of Nazi Germany.

The program killed 5,000 people in England. But they were also demoralizing, showing up with little warning and causing massive devastation.

The Allied pilots could catch the V-1s and knock them off course by nudging the wing but there wasn't much they could do about the rockets.

"They were psychological weapons, too," he said. "You couldn't hear the V-2."

It was quite a sight for a boy from

(SEE BENNETT PAGE 22)

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Walking his own path

Bargersville man went against expectations to become Marine

STORY BY GREG SEITER | PHOTOS BY MARK FREELAND

It was nothing personal and certainly not due to a lack of respect but Jerry Buchanan knew he didn't want to follow in his father's footsteps when it came to choosing a career path.

"In my hometown (St. Charles, Va.), I worked a lot of odd jobs but really, the only thing around there was coal mines," Buchanan said, while reflecting on his teenage years. "My dad was a coal miner and my wife's dad was a coal miner. They both died from black lung disease. I didn't know exactly what I wanted but it definitely wasn't that."

Military service seemed like it would be a good fit but even then, Buchanan, now 72, chose to walk his own path.

"I had friends in the Army and I was told not to go into the Marines. So, I decided to go into the Marines," he said.

When the time came to leave home for basic training in San Diego, Buchanan was convinced he was ready. However, he was quickly proven wrong.

"I was prepared but it was a shock and an eye opener," he said. "There's really nothing you can do to prepare for drill instructors. They break you down and then build you back up."

For his area of specialty, Buchanan elected to focus on mortars.

"After basic, you have to go to military occupation special training so I had six weeks of mortar training, also in San Diego," he said.

Once that was completed and after 30 days of military leave, Buchanan joined the 3rd Marine Division in Vietnam.

"I arrived in January 1969 but it was very hot and humid there," he said.

The division's responsibilities were very specific.

"If we encountered any Viet Cong, our job was to lay down cover fire," he said. "We also had illumination mortars we could use to light up an area if we needed to."

Due to the nature of their work and in an attempt to better protect themselves, Buchanan's unit relocated almost daily.

"We were always in seek-and-destroy mode and we normally traveled during the day," he said. "If you stopped and

set up camp, it usually didn't end well.

"At night, if we felt like we were in an area that was being approached, we would periodically fire off five or six mortars, just to keep the enemy honest."

Buchanan was also part of a Rapid Response Team, charged with the responsibility of rescuing wounded Marines after engagement.

However, aside from the many intense experiences Buchanan had while in Vietnam, there was an occasional moment he can now look back on and laugh about.

"I was talking with a guy in 2013 that I served with and he reminded me that

(SEE BUCHANAN PAGE 19)

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JERRY BUCHANAN

AGE: 72

BIRTHPLACE/HOMETOWN: St. Charles, Va.

RESIDENCE: Bargersville

YEARS OF SERVICE: 1968-72

BRANCH OF SERVICE: U.S. Marines

ASSIGNED UNIT: 3rd Marine Division

DUTIES: 60mm mortar

RANK: Sergeant

MILITARY HONORS: Purple Heart, Vietnam Service Medal, Presidential Unit Citation, Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry (unit)

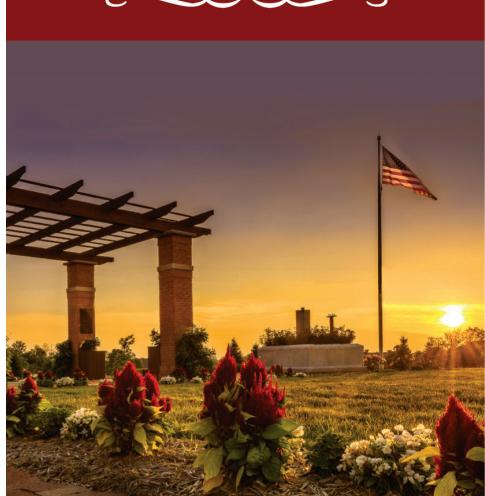
FAMILY: Wife, Sue



Jerry Buchanan of Bargersville displays a photo of his unit in the Marines.

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NEIL BUTTRAM

AGE: 91

BIRTHPLACE/HOMETOWN: Ragland, New Mexico

RESIDENCE: Greenwood

YEARS OF SERVICE: 1951-1963

BRANCH OF SERVICE: U.S. Air Force

ASSIGNED UNIT: 735th AC&W, 7425th Air Base Group, 461st Fighter Squadron

DUTIES: Radar operator, personnel

RANK ATTAINED: Captain

MILITARY HONORS: Good Conduct Medal, National Defense Service Medal for World War II, Longevity Award for officers with two oak leaf clusters, USAF Outstanding Unit

FAMILY: Wife Bertha (d. Jan. 13, 2020); son David (d. June 19, 2006); daughter Marissa and son-in-law Joel Craig Westberry; four grandchildren, four great-grandchildren

Neil Butram of Greenwood displays a unit award he earned serving in French Morocco. Opposite page, Butram in 1956.



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'Just doing my job'

Air Force veteran reflects on his role in history

STORY BY AMY MAY | PHOTOS BY MARK FREELAND

When Neil Buttram looks back on his 91 years of life, he realizes everything is connected and the things he did initiated actions later on.

"Sometimes I think 'how did I get involved in all of that?' I didn't realize I was part of history. I was just doing my job," he said.

He was born in New Mexico on a farm near Ragland. His father farmed and later owned an auto repair shop. After his father died, the family moved to Tucumcari, New Mexico.

Shortly after graduating from Tucumcari High School in 1949, Buttram learned he would be drafted for the war in Korea.

"I enlisted in the Air Force on Jan. 5, 1951 to avoid being drafted, as I did not want to be in the infantry," he said. "I am a veteran of World War II simply because I joined the Air Force before they signed the treaty with Japan," he said.

He admits he cheated on the eye exam. His left eye was 20/200 due to an injury he got when he was working for a home improvement



company. He was able to read the line of type, memorize it and recite it back when asked to cover his right eye.

He was sent to Lackland Air Force Base in Texas for basic training, but due to the volume of enlistees, many men were sent to Sewart Air Force Base in Smyrna, Tennessee.

There, he met the love of his life, Bertha Mae Denny.

After basic training, his unit was deployed to French Morocco in North Africa and tasked with constructing a Ground Control Intercept Radar Station. Buttram was to be a radar operator, although he didn't receive any formal training, just learned on-the-job, he said.

"Our job was to monitor aircraft

coming through our area," he said.

The area was isolated, in the middle of the Sahara Desert.

One of his strongest memories was the sandstorms, one of which lasted three days.

"We had sand in everything, including our food." They had to use ropes to guide themselves to the barracks, operations building and mess hall.

Buttram's quick thinking — and disobedience of orders — might have saved a pilot's life. He was on duty at the radar station when the officer in charge said he was feeling ill and was going to rest but to come get him if anything came up.

(SEE BUTTRAM PAGE 21)

Happy Memorial Day



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The making of a Marine

Enlisting in the Marine Corps made Eric Cecil who he is today

STORY BY GREG SEITER | PHOTOS BY WARRIE DENNIS

Retired Master Gunnery Sergeant James "Eric" Cecil began what would prove to be an extensive military career in 1984 almost immediately after graduating from Perry Meridian High School.

As his platoon's boot camp honor graduate at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot in San Diego, California, Cecil transferred to Camp Johnson, North Carolina to attend a course in basic administration supply. From there, having graduated first in his class, Cecil was promoted to lance corporal and reported for duty at Headquarters Battalion, Headquarters Marine Corps Henderson Hall (Washington D.C.) on Christmas Eve 1984, where he was assigned to the inaugural parade and ball committee for President Ronald Reagan's second inauguration.

"I was very proud of being the new guy on the

block in D.C. and being assigned to President Reagan's committee, even though we didn't end up doing the parade because the temperatures were too low," he said.

In 1987, Cecil was transferred to the Third Field Service Support Group in Okinawa, Japan and then later to Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron, Marine Corps Air Station in Futenma, Japan before moving to the Individual Ready Reserves and returning to Indiana in May 1998. He joined the Indiana Army National Guard as a Specialist 4 with Company F, 738th Maintenance Battalion but soon thereafter decided to re-enlist with the Marines.

"I came back to Indiana with the intention of going to college," he said. "I bought a house and took some classes at IUPUI but it just didn't work for me. I missed the camaraderie of the Marine

JAMES "ERIC" CECIL

Age: 55

Birthplace/Hometown: Rushville/Shelbyville

Residence: Greenwood area

Years of Service: 1984-2009

Branch of Service: U.S. Marines

Duties: Intelligence

Rank: Master Gunnery Sergeant

Military Honors: Legion of Merit, Joint Service Commendation Medal (twice), Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal, Joint Service Achievement Medal, Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal with two gold stars, Army Achievement Medal, Presidential Unit Citation

Family: Wife, Kathy; children, Josh and Kane; stepchildren, Erin and Chloe

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After spending time as an Intelligence Specialist in El Toro, California and then completing additional training at the Navy Marine Corps Intelligence Training Center, Cecil deployed to Saudi Arabia in December 1990 with the Third Marine Aircraft Wing, G-2 in support of Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm.

During the next three years, he spent additional time in Japan, graduated in the top 10% from the Staff Noncommissioned Officer Academy career course and was transferred to the Navy Marine Corps Intelligence Training Center (NMITC) for instructor duty before ultimately being transferred to United States Atlantic Command in March 1995. While there, Cecil was selected as the staff noncommissioned officer in charge and senior enlisted watch analyst in the Joint Intelligence Center.

"Being a very shy and introverted person growing up, I really didn't come out of that until my second enlistment," he said. "I grew into roles and developed skills I didn't even know I had."

Back at NMITC, Cecil worked as a coordinator for the Basic Intelligence course, completed the Master Instructor Program and was nominated for Instructor of the Year honors. In December 1998, he was promoted to the rank of gunnery sergeant before relocating to California for numerous Combined Arms exercises.

In May 2001, Cecil was assigned to Combined Joint Task Force, Kuwait until being re-designated as Coalition Forces Land Component Command and

being deployed to Afghanistan following the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. After that, he was transferred to 1st Marine Division G-2, Oceanside, California as the analysis chief.

During 2002, Cecil provided intelligence support to the entire division, which included three infantry regiments and one artillery regiment. He deployed with 1st Marine Division as the intelligence operations chief for Operation Iraqi Freedom in February 2003. Throughout the next five years, he was assigned intelligence-related duty at Camp H.M. Smith in Hawaii, deployed back to Iraq, promoted to the rank of master gunnery sergeant and eventually became the first Intelligence Chief to deploy with an infantry battalion serving as the liaison officer for 2nd Battalion, 7th Marines in support of operations in Afghanistan against the Taliban.

Cecil retired Nov. 2, 2009 after serving the U.S. military for nearly 26 years.

However, he continued to work with the Marine Corps and after a brief stint in California, took on the role of in-theater liaison officer and subject matter expert on Marine Corps intelligence tactics, techniques and procedures, based at a facility in Bedford, Indiana. Cecil later deployed twice to Afghanistan as a contractor government civilian.

He hired on as a task manager and program office assistant at Naval Surface Warfare Center in Crane, Indiana, working in that capacity for more than six years before assuming the position of technical program manager in March 2018. A little more than

(SEE CECIL PAGE 17)



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A privilege to serve

Greenwood man fought in Vietnam, still involved in veterans' affairs

STORY BY JENN WILLHITE | PHOTOS BY WARRIE DENNIS

When 17-year-old Jay Collars enlisted in the United States Air Force in 1955, it was a time of peace.

Eisenhower was president and the economy was in bad shape, Collars recalls.

"I joined the military to have a job, so to speak," 84-year-old Collars says. "Once I enlisted, I realized there was more to it than just a paycheck."

The Baltimore native says his patriotism grew as a result, and he quickly realized it was "indeed a privilege" to serve as he came to love the military.

However, as is often the case, boot camp proved a shock.

"The initial couple of months was learning strict discipline in the military way," he says. "That doesn't mean abuse of any kind; that just means they taught you to be on time. They taught you the discipline of listening to and obeying orders without questioning."

Collars learned the importance of teamwork and that it took everyone working together to accomplish a goal.

His first assignment was as a crew chief on a cargo aircraft, Collars recalls. He served in that role for one year before being put on flight status

as a second flight engineer — a position he held for the next 20 years.

With a decade of service behind him, a then 27-year-old Collars was given his first orders to deploy to Vietnam in April 1965.

"My first thought was, 'Where the heck is Vietnam?'" Collars says. "It just wasn't well known at that time."

In 1965, there was no war.

Collars' obligation on this deployment was more in line with training than fighting.

"It was a combination of a teaching and combat role, training the South Vietnamese government and army," Collars says. "The emphasis was on

training."

While stationed at Pleiku Air Base in Vietnam, Collars and his crew came under attack.

"I was crew chief and had two other people working for me," he says. "We finished our shift and were heading back to our barracks when the rocket attack started."

Aircrafts to either side of Collars and his crew had been hit by 100mm rocket fire and were set ablaze, he says.

"That is where the military discipline training came in," he says. "You do what you need to do and what your priorities are."

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JAY COLLARS

AGE: 84

HOMETOWN/BIRTHPLACE: Baltimore, Maryland

RESIDENCE: Indianapolis

YEARS OF SERVICE: June 1955 to July 1980

BRANCH: United States Air Force

UNIT: 1st Special Operations Squadron (April 1965-April 1966); 17th Special Operations Squadron (April 1970 to April 1971).

DUTIES: Crew chief — aircraft maintenance, flight engineer.

RANK: Chief Master Sergeant

MILITARY HONORS: Bronze Star for Heroism, Distinguished Flying Cross and eight air medals.

FAMILY: Wife, Jan (Genieve)

With rockets still raining down, the crew hustled to remove bombs and drop the fuel tanks from six aircraft and tow them to safety in just under 45 minutes.

"After the fact, you wonder, 'Wow, what was I thinking?'" Collars says. "But you acted in the interest of the Air Force and the next day's mission. We had to be ready for the next day's mission regardless. So, yeah, you

worry about it and think about it, but you say, 'Well, that is over with, what's next?'"

It was April 1966 and, with his one year obligation met, Collars was headed home to the United States.

For the next four years, Collars was stationed at Stewart Air Force Base in Newburgh, N.Y., where he was a flight engineer who helped provide air lift support for West Point generals, high ranking officers and coaches for the various sports teams.

Then, in 1970, Collars was again called up to return to Vietnam, but this time would be different.

In January, he was a combat crew member and underwent additional extensive training in jungle and water survival, as well as a 10-day POW training.

"I got through the first time and thought, 'Am I going to make it through the second time?'" he says.

Collars found out he was assigned to Saigon and says his concern wasn't so much about the fear of what could happen, but more in line with the danger he was going to face.

Within 10 days of being stationed at Phu Cat Air Base in southern Vietnam, Collars was placed on three different

(SEE COLLARS PAGE 22)

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A passion for planes

Bargersville man began long career in airplanes by enlisting

STORY BY CHERYL FISCUS JENKINS | PHOTOS BY MARK FREELAND

Jason Newbold works in his office with windows overlooking small planes at Greenwood Municipal Airport. The view is a world away from his military days of parachuting into Iraq.

Newly graduated mid-term from Bedford North Lawrence High School in 2002, Newbold traded his school books and locker for United States Army life and boot camp. Tragic attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, remained fresh in his mind and heart, so serving his country seemed like a logical choice.

"I felt like I needed to go into the military," he said. "I felt compelled to do something different."

Newbold graduated boot camp the same day his classmates were attending high school graduation ceremonies in Bedford. His direction would be different, though, heading to Fort Bragg military base in North Carolina with primary duties of packing parachutes and jumping out of airplanes. He spent three years as a parachute rigger, ensuring the safety of airdrop equipment, and was deployed twice to Iraq.

Most memories of the Army he doesn't care to discuss, except briefly about his role in February 2004 of parachuting into western Iraq. He



Jason Newbold displays a photo of his father and grandfather in his office. Both relatives were instrumental in his decision to work in the aviation industry.

served in the military's 82nd Airborne Division and gained a wealth of experience and many close friends. He was awarded two Commendation Medals for his work.

"I'm really pleased with my Army service," he said. "It helped excel things in my life from a maturity and responsibility standpoint."

The work he's done since the

JASON NEWBOLD

AGE: 38

HOMETOWN: Bedford

RESIDENCE: Bargersville

YEARS OF SERVICE: 2002-2005

BRANCH OF SERVICE: Army

ASSIGNED UNIT: 82nd Airborne Division

DUTIES: Parachute rigger

RANK ATTAINED: E4

MILITARY HONORS: Two Army Commendation Medals

FAMILY: Daughter Jaselyn

military is what shapes Newbold's interest and passion today.

After leaving the Army in 2005, Newbold return to Bedford to regroup and re-organize his civilian life path. He managed CVS Pharmacy stores throughout Indiana for a decade, learning important business and finance skills and how to work well with a variety of people. In 2013, he used his GI Bill benefits to attend and eventually graduate from Vincennes University's Indianapolis campus with an associate's degree in science with an emphasis on aviation.

Airplanes have been Newbold's passion since he was young and his

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grandfather, Tony Newbold, introduced him to flying. The 38-year-old joined Eagle Creek Aviation in aircraft sales and research for several years before venturing into the purchase and sale of aircrafts with his own business.

In 2020, he founded BOLDJets, which offers aircraft sales, charter, maintenance and management services, and specializes in six to 10-seat light jets and turboprop planes. The company also recently acquired Hendricks County Aviation flight school in Danville, which offers flight training to anyone interested.

Newbold, president of BOLDJets, describes his job as similar to being a real estate agent for private planes, in which he finds and sells aircraft to individuals and corporations across the country. The process is much like property transactions with price offers, letters of intent and closings.

Jet sales, Newbold said, can average in cost of around \$1 to \$3 million. He has sold 150 airplanes over the past seven years and continues to evolve the business as the market demands.

His latest venture of owning the flight school will help create even more interest in flying, despite the hours of commitment and hefty price tag of becoming a private pilot. People of all ages can work toward a pilot's license, though youths have to be age 16 before flying solo.

Brian Love, manager of Hendricks County Aviation, joined Newbold's team this year, and enjoys working with someone so knowledgeable and enthusiastic about airplanes.

"Jason likes to be part of a team," he said. "He's very involved and wants to see everything he's involved in succeed. This is his way to give back. You can tell he is very passionate about the industry, and he wants to see other people enjoy it, too."

Newbold credits his grandfather for the flying expertise and his father, also named Tony Newbold, for sharing his business knowledge. He pilots his own plane, a Cherokee Six, whenever he gets the chance, traveling with friends or his daughter, Jaselyn, primarily to places within a two-hour radius. Two of his favorite vacation stops are Nashville and Gatlinburg, Tenn. He will also pick up family members in Bedford and take them for a flight.

Christian books lay stacked on Newbold's office desk, and his church, Grace Assembly of God in Whiteland, keeps him grounded in his faith. His church home is important as he navigates through life's difficulties and the thrill of following his childhood dream. Flying and being with other members of the pilot community take him to a place of fun and solitude.

"I like to get into the air and fly around," he said. "It brings me a little bit of peace. I kind of get to leave my problems on the ground."



CECIL

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

one year later, Cecil transferred to the technology services organization. Today, he continues to work as an IT supervisor while leading a team of 15 personnel responsible for maintenance of the middleware, software and cybersecurity associated with primary applications.

"From where I was at and what I was doing as a kid in Shelbyville, I can look back now and say being a Marine was life changing," Cecil said. "When I finally do completely retire, I want to be someplace warm so I can play golf."

"There are thousands of stories to be told but the biggest thing to me right now is that I miss the camaraderie," he added. "Even though I'm still friends with many of the guys I served with, it's just not the same."

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Breaking stereotypes

New Whiteland man hopes to help other veterans

STORY BY GREG SEITER | PHOTOS BY MARK FREELAND



Michael Peterson pets Odin at his New Whiteland home. In front is a stuffed toy he brought back from Cuba after his service there.

Unsure of what career path to pursue, Michael Peterson decided to follow in his uncle's footsteps by enlisting in the U.S. Army.

"He raved about the Army, talking about all the places he had been to and the things he had seen," Peterson said. "He just loved it so I decided to give it a shot."

Peterson's intent was to become a military police officer but when he learned no openings were available in that particular field, he agreed to be trained for 31 Echo duty (work commonly associated with prisoners and detainees).

For basic and advanced training, Peterson was sent to Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri.

"You're never prepared for what you'll go through in basic and advanced training," he said. "At first, you have people yelling at you, paperwork and commands coming in from everywhere. Even when that calms down a little, you're still shaken."

"I appreciate that they have to help you re-learn how to learn. You're re-learning physical exertion. You're re-learning

MICHAEL PETERSON

AGE: 30

BIRTHPLACE/HOMETOWN: Quad Cities area between Illinois and Iowa

RESIDENCE: New Whiteland

YEARS OF SERVICE: 2012-15

BRANCH OF SERVICE: U.S. Army

ASSIGNED UNIT: Mostly with 291st

DUTIES: Prison guard

Rank: E-4 (specialist)

Family: Wife, Ashton

classroom experience that fits the U.S. military.

"It's overwhelming for sure but I took my time with it, absorbed and moved on."

Peterson hoped he would eventually be stationed in South Korea or Germany but was devastated to learn he would instead be going to Guantanamo Bay.

"South Korea is party central for new recruits," he said. "I'm not very social and I thought going somewhere like that would help me find myself."

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"Germany is beautiful. I knew friends who had been stationed there."

"But you hear terrible things about Guantanamo. And I was going there to be a block guard."

Peterson advanced from E-1 to E-2 rank in only a few months and then progressed to Private First Class (E-3) status. But his journey was challenging at times due to the nature of his job.

"The place is run like a prison and we were there to monitor and maintain control," he said. "But there was one block that held high-level security detainees. When we were there, we had to wear MOPP suits. We called them Poop Suits because we would sometimes have poop thrown at us."

MOPP (Mission Oriented Protective Posture) is U.S. military protective gear typically used to protect against chemical and biological agents.

"The detainees don't have a way to fight back so to fill their day, they would throw stuff at us."

However, according to Peterson, Guantanamo Bay itself "was absolutely gorgeous."

"There was a clothing store there and a couple of fast-food places along with a bowling alley," he said. "We also had access to a recreational center with athletic fields, a swimming pool and a rock wall."

"There were also a bunch of beaches so I earned my scuba and boating certification there."

After spending one year in Guantanamo Bay, Peterson was assigned to Fort Leavenworth in Kansas where he spent his last three years in the Army working at an all-military prison.

"My first couple of years there were fine but as I progressed to E-4, it became very apparent to me that there's a 'good ol' boy' system in the military," Peterson said.

"I didn't hang out with anyone outside of work and I didn't even go to the bar. I just went back to my room every day, played video games and talked with my fiancé."

"I started to notice a few things that

could have put lives in danger and I didn't want to be part of that."

The end of Peterson's military service contract coincided perfectly with his plans to marry Ashton and when she secured an internship in Indiana, he relocated as well. Eventually, Peterson found security-related work in Indianapolis and stayed in that field for a while before moving on.

"I currently work at the Aldi warehouse in Greenwood. It's very labor intensive and I like to be physically active," he said. "Sitting behind a desk is not my style."

But in looking toward the future, Peterson's post-military experiences with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs have helped him realize there may be another line of work he would be well-suited for.

"When I was signing up for the Army, my recruiter told me that if I got out clean, I would have VA healthcare for life but about two years ago, when I was having some issues with my feet and went to the VA emergency room, I was denied benefits," he said. "Even though my wife and I aren't working high-income jobs, our combined income put us over the line. I didn't know there was a limit."

"I've tried to appeal but I haven't even gotten a response."

"So now, I want to find a way to help others in my situation ... average people who live average lives. I don't know how to approach it but I want to try."

Peterson also hopes civilians can eventually learn not to stereotype veterans.

"There are a lot of people out there who think of veterans in ways they're shown in movies: hard-faced beer drinkers with a buzz cut," he said. "I'm not like that and I know a lot of others who aren't like that. In fact, when I got out, I dyed my hair pink and got more tattoos and piercings."

"I don't think veterans are these hard, nasty, unapproachable people. A lot of us are very soft and kind. That stereotype needs to change."

BUCHANAN

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

one time, we found a lot of enemy ammunition and we were on our way to blow it up," Buchanan said. "I was carrying a satchel of C-4 explosives but I was also carrying a .45 pistol on my left side that day. Well, apparently, the .45 was on half cock and somehow, the satchel discharged the pistol."

The bullet went through Buchanan's pants and hit the heel of his boot.

"My buddy knew what had happened and was laughing but I thought I had been shot," Buchanan said. "I was lucky. I just got a powder burn on my thigh."

After leaving Vietnam, Buchanan spent his remaining time as an active Marine working as a military policeman at Camp Lejeune in North Carolina until being discharged in 1972.

Once back in Indiana, Buchanan worked in processing at the U.S. Postal Service's downtown Indianapolis plant until 1978 when he became a supervisor. From that point on, he spent the next 25 years working as a supervisor or manager until retiring. But rather than sit back and relax, Buchanan then took

on a contract role as a traveling instructor for the University of Oklahoma.

"We traveled the country and worked with supervisors and managers," he said. "We taught them basic things from how to run certain machines to anything having to do with management skills. I did that until March 2012."

Following two years of relaxation, Buchanan was hired as a part-time custodial worker for the Center Grove Community School Corporation. Spending most of his time at North Grove Elementary School, Buchanan transitioned to full-time status in 2019. He officially retired in October 2021.

"The greatest pleasure I've had was working for Center Grove," he said. "I've always been an introvert but working with the teachers and students there really helped me."

"I never really talked to my wife or anyone I worked with about my time in service so I finally decided it was time to share some information about my experiences."

"I don't do drugs, alcohol or tobacco, and I've had good jobs," said Buchanan, who earned a master's degree in management in 2004. "I've worked hard to get where I'm at and I've never used anything as an excuse."



Jerry Buchanan with members of his Marine unit in Vietnam. He is kneeling in front on the left.

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From high school to sky high

Greenwood man drafted during WWII keeps memories alive

STORY BY BOB BROMLEY | PHOTOS BY WARRIE DENNIS



For Dale Zapp, family is everything, and he has fulfilling relationships over four generations to show for his devotion. But Zapp often thinks of another close-knit group he was a part of so very long ago, 12 men bound together by the chaos of World War II.

Zapp, an Indianapolis native, was drafted into the Navy while still in high school, with his first stop being boot camp in December 1943 at the Great Lakes Naval Training Center in Chicago. From there, he went to the Naval Air Technical Training Center in Memphis where he received more specialized training in radio, radar, Morse Code and flag communication. Next up was gunnery training at the Navy's gunnery school in Jacksonville, Fla., followed by his final stateside stop in San Diego.

In Hawaii, Zapp met up with the 11 men he would be serving with as the crew of a PBM Sea Plane destined for the Philippines. Zapp, despite being just 19 years old, thousands of miles from home and heading into heavy fighting over the Pacific Ocean, does not recall feeling afraid or nervous.

"I think at that age, you're so young, and you don't think anything is going to happen to you," he said.

The PBM Sea Plane had multiple

DALE ZAPP

AGE: 96

BIRTHPLACE: Indianapolis

RESIDENCE: Greenwood

YEARS OF SERVICE: 1943-1945

BRANCH OF SERVICE: Navy

DUTIES: Operated radar, radio and port side gunner (50 caliber machine gun) on a PBM Sea Plane

RANK: Aviator Radioman 2nd Class

MILITARY HONORS: Distinguished Flying Cross

FAMILY: Wife, Patricia (died last December after 72 years of marriage); sons, Pat (wife, Linda), David (wife, Karla) and Doug (wife, Linda); five grandchildren; 16 great-grandchildren

gun positions and was equipped with bomb bays. Zapp's team flew 12-hour missions, with patrolling for submarines among their duties. On two occasions, Zapp remembers they rescued pilots who had been shot down and were adrift in the ocean below.

Two other times the team engaged in a dogfight, the first time being on just their second or third flight out, Zapp said.

"We had five of them jump us, the tail gunner got one of them, and they

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retreated," he said.

The second time they were attacked, Zapp himself shot down a plane, causing two others to retreat.

Even under those harrowing circumstances, Zapp states he was not frightened.

"I don't think that I was ever afraid; you just have that gung-ho spirit," he said.

Zapp said that he spent very little time on a ship during his time at war. In fact, he remembers sleeping most nights on the wing of the plane in a sleeping bag.

Ironically, the one time Zapp did feel afraid was after the fighting had ended and they were getting ready to come home. Zapp and his team were in their plane and were hit with a typhoon.

"Every once in a while, our plane engine would miss, and stop briefly, and you weren't sure if it was going to start up again," he said.

The logistics of getting everyone home after the war meant it would be months before Zapp would return to the United States. The war ended in August 1945, but with officers and men with families given priority, Zapp, who was single at the time, did not arrive in San Francisco until December 1945. He made it to Indiana a month later.

Once back in Indiana, Zapp settled well into his post-war life. He and his wife, Patricia ("Patty"), who was an elementary school teacher, were married for 72 years until her death last December. The couple, who lived in Beech Grove for over 60 years before their move to Greenwood in 2019, were avid bridge players, frequently going to out-of-town tournaments. They had three sons, five grandchildren and 16 great-grandchildren.

Zapp, 96, is a big sports fan, especially baseball and high school and college basketball. He coached all three of his sons in Little League and saw a grandson, A.J. Zapp, play professional baseball for a decade after being drafted in the first round by the Atlanta Braves in 1996.

Zapp still keeps the war and his old crewmates in his memories. He got together with them for a few times for reunions, beginning in 1985. Despite being from 12 different states, the group made it a point to get together when they could. Ten of them have since died, while Zapp has lost touch with the other crew member.

Zapp believes that it is important to keep alive the memories of the brave people who served in World War II, and toward that end, he has gone to his grandchildren's and great-grandchildren's schools to tell their story. Zapp also participated in the 2013 Honor Flight, flying from Indianapolis to Washington, D.C. with other World War II veterans.

BUTTRAM

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

"Suddenly, I hear over my earphones Mayday! Mayday! This is Navy 612."

Buttram said he was a "nervous wreck" and did not know which quarters were his officer's and didn't have enough time to go get him anyway.

"I could not tell the Navy pilot 'You just hang on up there while I go looking for the controller.' I thought 'Boy, you have got to answer and do the best you can.'

The plane's wings were icing up in a storm and the compass had malfunctioned, so the pilot wanted to change altitude to avoid the storm. Buttram said he heard the pilot's relief in his voice as the radar station responded and granted his request and safely guided him to his home base.

Buttram said if the plane had crashed, there likely would have been an investigation and court martial. Both he and his duty officer could have been charged with several offenses, including the officer being absent from his post and Buttram's failure to go get him as ordered.

In 1953, Buttram returned to Tennessee, married Bertha and had several stateside posts where he worked as an instructor in radar operations and aircraft identification. He was sent to Germany and Bertha joined him. Their son, David, was born there.

The family returned to the U.S., where Buttram was named Officer in Charge (Deputy Commander) of the Armed Forces Examining Station in New Orleans. All branches of the military served together at the station, where they tested mental and physical qualifications of recruits for military service, prepared the paperwork and administered the oaths of enlistment. The Buttrams' daughter, Marissa, was born there.

Buttram requested release from active duty in 1962 and was transferred to inactive reserve.

The family moved to Nashville, Tennessee, Bertha's home state, and Neil found work with the U.S. Postal Service, where he remained until retirement. He worked as a troubleshooter and trainer on new equipment. The family's home in Tennessee was large and sat on acreage. In 2013, the Buttrams realized the caretaking was too much and decided to move to Greenwood to be near their daughter and her family. They had a home built in



Neil Buttram's military medals are displayed.

the new Homecoming subdivision.

A couple of years ago, Buttram decided to write an account of his life. It started just a few pages at a time after Bertha died in 2020. Now, it's over 70 pages.

"As I remember and record this narrative, I am overwhelmed and amazed to see the accomplishments, improvements and individual achievements in so many areas of life that I have been allowed to take a small part in. I wonder what all of these people saw in me that they would select me for increased trust, upward mobility and allow me the authority to play a small part in the activities of God's domain," he wrote in his story.

And speaking of God's domain, Buttram said his most important position of all was as a deacon at his church.

"It was teaching, instruction, welfare and the souls of the congregation. I felt that responsibility more than anything. Everywhere else, I was just doing my job."

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BENNETT

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

Iowa.

Bennett signed up to join the Army Air Force, which was one branch during World War II, in 1942 and was assigned to headquarters for the 387th Bombardment Group.

"I didn't care what rank I was. I took all the calls. HQ would call down and scramble the code," he said.

Bennett wanted to fly combat but didn't think he'd pass the eye test. But after battling an ear infection and making numerous visits to the flight surgeon, he had the opportunity to memorize the eye chart and "pass" the test.

"He said I could go on as a togglier," Bennett said. A togglier is a crewmember responsible for aiming and dropping bombs.

But before he could begin training, a major from another of Bennett's units got wind of it and said "you're not flying. You wear glasses."

Bennett took part in six campaigns as the 387th advanced across Europe.

"The U.S. bombed cities during the day and the Brits bombed them at night," he said. "We were really destroying Germany, bombing it into oblivion. After a year in England, we moved to France, then Belgium, then Holland. We were given targets in support of our ground troops. The goal was to get to Berlin to knock out the Third Reich. Patton slowed us down to let the Russians take Berlin. Lots think that was a mistake."

After the war, Bennett was in Paris and he met Dagrum, a Norwegian girl. They got married and he taught school in Norway.

"I lived there six years and taught English, art and P.E. I taught English in Norwegian. They decided the American accent was OK."

They returned to the US and found work at Franklin College. Dagrum was the director of data processing and Robert taught art history and art education. Later, he moved to Franklin Middle School and taught art until his retirement.

He enjoys golf and tennis. As a tennis player, he won two gold medals in the Senior Games and was a member of the Carmel Racquet Club.

Although recently sidelined by a stroke, Bennett hopes to rehabilitate so he can again enjoy golf.

COLLARS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

combat missions to gain combat flight experience and become certified as a combat flight engineer.

The crew commanded gunships that strictly operated flights under the cover of darkness.

"We had four mini guns onboard," Collars explains. "If we put all four guns on the line and made one circle of the target, we could put a bullet every half inch and cover an entire football field. We had what we called devastating fire power."

During this deployment, Collars completed more than 80 combat missions.

Collars would work three days on and two off with down time spent disposing of administrative duties as a first sergeant, he recalls.

While flying a combat mission at 2,500 feet — which was common — a plane could easily be hit by 50 caliber machine gun fire from the ground, Collars says.

Unfortunately, this time while flying a mission, the enemy didn't miss.

"They hit one of our engines and blew the oil line going to the propeller," Collars says. "We lost the ability of that engine and propeller to provide any airlift to us."

For nearly 30 minutes while navigating over mountainous terrain, the crew managed to land at Pleiku Air Base without further incident, Collars says.

"My job was to keep the one engine we had running without overheating and making sure nothing happened to it while the pilot was trying to keep the plane in flight, the co-pilot was radioing our situation to the ground, and our navigator was trying to find the nearest place we could land."

Six months later, Collars returned home.

Collars readily says there is nothing he would do differently if given the chance. However, when reminiscing about that 17-year-old young man, Collars leans on hindsight for perspective.

"I was 17 when I went in and men don't mature until they are 30," he says. "I did a lot of things I probably shouldn't have done, but I survived it and like they say, 'It all turned out well.'"

Among the greatest military lessons Collars says he learned was the importance of understanding how to work with people, he says. During his last decade of service, Collars held several supervisory roles which



taught him how to "deal with people to get them to do what you want them to do and make them think it was their idea."

Collars remains actively involved in veterans' affairs, including through his membership with the American Legion Post 1919 and VFW Post 5684, both in Greenwood. Most recently, in 2019, he was inducted into the Indiana Military Veterans Hall of Fame, and in 2021, he received the White Award for military service offered by the Freemasons, he adds.

Collars' wife of nearly 20 years, Jan, says it is clear the military shaped her husband to be the leader he is and it's an experience that's been good for her, too. Although she is a homebody, Jan says there is certainly value in staying active, especially when it comes to promoting the importance of military service.

"You see that lacking in the young people today," 84-year-old Jan says. "They are thinking of themselves. Straight out of high school or college they should have to complete two years of military service. There is such a difference in six weeks of boot camp. I saw that in my own family."

Collars genuinely appreciates it when people thank him for his service, but says it is also important to help veterans in need.

"There are a lot of disabled veterans out there who have paid the price for their service," he says. "A lot of times, they just need a helping hand."



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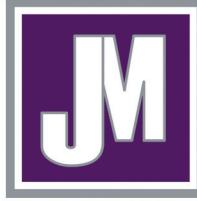
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