

2023

SALUTE

A DAILY JOURNAL
PUBLICATION

**A TRIBUTE TO
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VETERANS**





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remember & honor
our nation's heroes.



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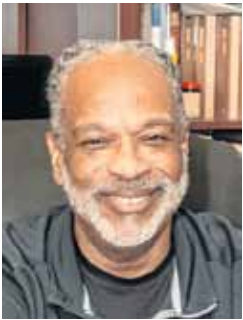
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ON THE COVER
Army Reserve veteran Blythe Potter
sits at her business,
Bargersville Wellness.
Photo by Mark Freeland

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Blythe Potter holds her daughter, Violet, in front of her downtown Bangersville business, Bangersville Wellness.

PROVING HERSELF TO HERSELF

Bangersville vet learns to challenge the rules

STORY BY AMANDA STEVENSON-HOLMES | PHOTO BY MARK FREELAND

Like many young people after graduating from Franklin Central High School in Indianapolis, Blythe Potter wasn't sure of her exact path forward. Again, like many of her peers and encouraged by her parents, she pursued college starting at Ball State University and majoring in dance. But something still didn't feel quite right.

In the meantime, her two brothers, Drew and Zach, were finding success pursuing their military careers.

"We were not a military service

family, and I was certainly not encouraged to pursue the military like my brothers were," Potter said.

After giving Ball State one more ol' college try and still not feeling the right momentum, she turned her attention to the Army Reserve and enlisted. Potter found herself with her brothers, all military police, all in the same unit. The family had done an about face in its service with the military.

During her deployment, Potter describes her security detail of Gen.

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BLYTHE POTTER

AGE: 41

BIRTHPLACE/HOMETOWN: Franklin Township, Southeast Indianapolis

RESIDENCE: Bargersville

YEARS OF SERVICE: 2002 to 2012

BRANCH: Army Reserve

ASSIGNED UNIT: 377th Military Police Company out of Cincinnati, Ohio; Bloomington, Indiana detachment

DUTIES: Military police, garrison, prison guard, frontline infantry, personal security

RANK: Started as a specialist and ended career as a sergeant

FAMILY: Husband, Michael; child, Violet

George W. Casey Jr. in Iraq one of her proudest moments. At the time, the since retired Casey was a four-star general who served as the 36th Chief of Staff of the United States Army and served as Commanding General, Multi-National Force - Iraq from June 2004 to Feb. 2007.

"Of the 19 individuals providing in-close security detail, which means we were physically within feet of him, nine of us were female and that meant a lot to all of us," explained Potter.

She believes her training that included learning how to drive evasively, survey sites and routes, plan foot formations and walking routes and use aviation — like helicopters — as an exit strategy, led to this important personal security detail.

Potter has taken that fighting spirit from the Army Reserve into the rest of her life as well. After being in the Army for almost five years, she managed a Greenwood spa and became a board-certified massage therapist in 2016. She's earned a Master of Business Administration degree from Siena Heights University, which has proved beneficial as she's owned and operated Bargersville Wellness since 2019 with friend Ashley Auld. Bargersville Wellness is a salon,



barber shop and spa offering massage services and yoga classes.

As her business name suggests, wellness is important to Potter. An environmentalist and vegan, she strives to live and do business sustainably and give back to her community. In honor of Earth Day in April, she and the Bargersville Wellness team hosted an Earth Day Clean Up in the local community.

Consistently looking for ways to give back to others and her community, like when she was in the Army Reserve, Potter also serves as a Police Merit Board member for the Town of Bargersville. She is a candidate for Bargersville Town Council at-large in the

fall 2023 general election, and she's a graduate of Leadership Johnson County at Franklin College's Signature Program.

For those who are considering joining the military, including women, Potter believes things are changing for the better.

"I went into the military to prove myself to myself and I learned to stop backing down and to challenge the rules," Potter said. And that's her advice to others: "Don't play into the rules. Set your boundaries and go kick a**."

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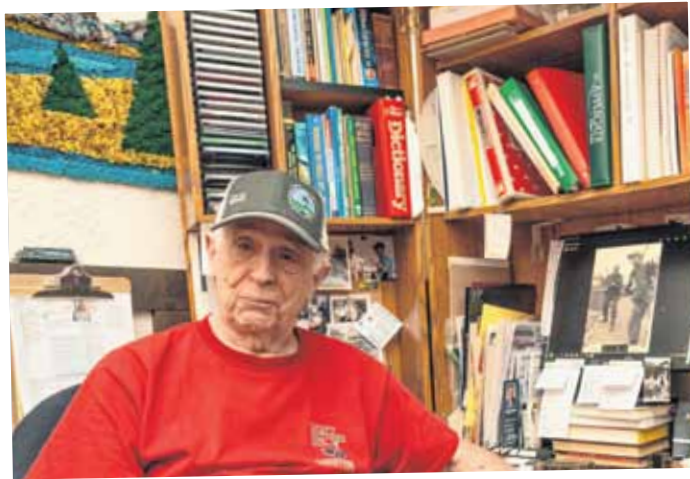
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‘JUST CALL ME LUCKY’

Simpson served as disc jockey for forces stationed in Japan

STORY BY JOYCE LONG | PHOTOS BY MARK FREELAND



During the early 1950s, Terrence (Terry) Simpson thrived in broadcast journalism at Butler University, where Tom Carnegie chaired the department. Simpson's knack for scene development led him to volunteer as stage director for the Catholic Theater Guild, where he met his future wife, Marilyn Rose Ginder.

Simpson chuckled as he recalled their first encounter. Because he didn't have time to eat, Simpson grabbed two candy bars from the cafeteria and had finished one when he saw two attractive girls

talking in the hallway. He handed Ginder the empty candy wrapper, and said, "I'll be back for that," and then kept walking. When he returned minutes later, she had thrown it away, so he razzed her about not believing him. He later found her phone number in the "Kiss Me Kate" roster and called to ask her out.

When Simpson received his draft notice during his junior year, the Army agreed he could finish his bachelor's degree. So in September 1954, Simpson reported to Missouri's Fort Leonard Wood Army Base for basic training. For his first three

Left: Terry Simpson at his Greenwood home. Right: Simpson's Far East Network patch.

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TERRY SIMPSON

Age: 92

BIRTHPLACE/HOMETOWN: Elkhart

YEARS OF SERVICE: 1954 to 1956

BRANCH: Army

ASSIGNED UNIT: Far East Network 161

DUTIES: Radio show on Monday to Friday, 5-11 p.m.

RANK: Specialist 3rd Class

FAMILY: Wife, Marilyn (deceased); children: Tim (deceased), Tom, Tonya, Therese, Thad, Tracy, Tekla; six grandchildren; several great-grandchildren

weeks, he fired their furnaces, a task he didn't enjoy. Simpson mentioned to their second lieutenant, a former jazz drummer, that there were enough musicians in his outfit to form a band. The officer embraced the idea, so they became the only Army training company with a battalion band. It also meant no more fireman duties for Simpson.

As the Korean War intensified, the second half of basic training led him to Camp Chaffee's Fifth Armored Division, whose courage during D-Day was well documented.

Simpson trained as a cannoneer, which involved preparing artillery for movement, combat and firing but never received On the Job Training (OJT). Instead, when asked who could type, Simpson was assigned to the supply room. After basic training, he found himself ready to deploy in Seattle but was reluctant to go to Korea without artillery OJT. Persuasive in pleading his case, Simpson was redirected to Tokyo to be a radio announcer.

After crossing the International Dateline, Simpson remembers Friday, March 11, 1955, as a day completely lost. As the ship approached the U.S.-occupied nation, his anticipation ramped up because he'd soon be a disc jockey for the U.S. Army Far East Network 161 — finally an opportunity to use his broadcasting degree.

Simpson arrived at the network headquarters at Camp Drake, formerly a Japanese officers' school at the edge of Tokyo, surprised that no one was expecting him. He spent three weeks in orientation before deploying to Fukuoka on



Japan's Kyushu Island, a day he considers the luckiest in his army career because those U.S. soldiers and families living at the Itazuke Air Base soon became his best friends.

His first day on the air was Sunday, April 17, 1955, a broadcast that included music, vocal adlibs and special cable patches and introduced a remote church service, all done by "just me and one engineer," he said. As the staff grew, Simpson expanded programming to include classical music and entertainment for children that included Koko the Clown.

"Our station crew was loaded with talent. I drew on that to make Story Fun Time by script and producing it."

writing the

Broadcasting Monday through Friday for three hours daily did not require a forty-hour week except during special assignments. When discharged in 1956, Simpson renewed his relationship with Ginder who often teased him about "his two-year vacation overseas."

Simpson began working for Channel 13 (WTHR) as their promotion director, six weeks before it went live, Oct. 30, 1957. Then he married Ginder, Aug. 2, 1958. As their family grew, so did Simpson's resume, including stints at local TV stations and eventually owning American Tent and Awning Company, where he worked until he was 90.

Currently, Simpson is organizing his memoir, "I Was Here Once." He enjoys spending time with his family but misses his wife, an artist and art teacher, who passed away two years ago.

After reviewing his life, Simpson grinned, then said, "Just call me lucky."

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



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MAJOR BBQ

Bargersville man trades Army greens for cook's apron

STORY BY TIM ONSTOTT | PHOTOS BY MARK FREELAND

Bargersville resident, U.S. Army Maj. Anthony "Tony" Minderman will be retiring on June 30 with 20 years of service. Upon graduating from Miami (Ohio) University in 2002, Tony entered basic training and Officer Candidate School at Fort Benning, Georgia. His subsequent duty stations have included Texas, Kentucky, New Mexico, Arkansas, Washington, Oklahoma and finally, Camp Atterbury. As an armor officer, Minderman served a one-year deployment in 2006 in Iraq and was then sent on a one-year deployment to Afghanistan in 2011 as a logistics officer.

It was while stationed at Fairbanks, Alaska, of all places, that Tony caught the BBQ bug. Shortly before his 2011 deployment to Afghanistan, he was driving with his wife, Regina, and saw a sign on the side of the road for the Alaska BBQ Association. He saved the number for a year before calling it upon his return in 2012. That call was answered by David Pruhs, then president of the AKBBQA, and Minderman decided to join and compete in the Alaska State BBQ Championship for his first competition ever as Pitbull BBQ. It was a successful outing, with Pitbull BBQ taking first place in the



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ANTHONY MINDERMAN

BIRTHPLACE/HOMETOWN: Cincinnati, Ohio

RESIDENCE: Bargersville

YEARS OF SERVICE: 20

BRANCH: Army

ASSIGNED UNIT: Various

DUTIES: Armor, logistics

RANK: Major

MILITARY HONORS: Combat Action Medal, Bronze Star

FAMILY: Wife: Regina; sons Joe and Tobias

seafood category and second place in ribs. That Pitbull had a BBQ flea that couldn't be scratched or shaken off.

For the next 10 years, Tony and Regina took Pitbull BBQ with them to several duty stations, along with their sons, Joe and Tobias, now 8 and 5. In their free time, the Mindermans entered BBQ competitions in 20 states and three foreign countries (Canada, Germany and the Netherlands) gaining valuable skills and knowledge along the way. There have been many great finishes and category wins for Pitbull, with career highlights of a fourth place finish in ribs and 36th place overall out of 400 teams at the 2019 American Royal World Series of Barbecue in Kansas City, Missouri. Among that list of "major" BBQ accomplishments is taking first place in the brisket category at the inaugural Hoosier BBQ Classic in

June of 2020.

As is the typical serviceman's profile, Minderman took an interest in giving back to the BBQ community that had welcomed him into the fold. He has served terms on the board of directors of the Alaska BBQ Association and the Pacific Northwest BBQ Association based in Washington state, where he also served as vice president.

Like most sports and recreational activities in 2020, the pandemic shut down most sanctioned BBQ contests, although the largest sanctioning body of those events, The Kansas City Barbecue Society (KCBS), issued strict guidelines for the safety of judges and competitors, most contests in the Hoosier state were either postponed or canceled. Minderman, by this time a Johnson County resident, joined a couple of other competition pitmasters interested in saving competitive BBQ in Indiana on the founding committee of the Hoosier BBQ Classic. The Hoosier Classic, as it is now known, will hold its fourth annual competition June 6-11 at the Johnson County Fairgrounds in Franklin. About 50 of the best



pitmasters in America will join Tony and The Yellow Rose of Texas BBQ Company (formerly Pitbull BBQ) to compete for over \$15,000 in prize money.

New adventures in BBQ

There never was a doubt what Maj. Anthony Minderman would do upon retirement from the military. He had grown up in Cincinnati, where his mother, Carol, was a great cook and restaurateur. Cooking was in his DNA, and the BBQ cuisine had become his passion.

In December of 2022, in preparation for his exit from the Army, Tony and Regina purchased a barbecue food trailer, named The Yellow Rose of Texas Barbecue Company. He can be found plying his craft at various places around Johnson County, sporadically until his enlistment is

up and more regularly in the future. Tony, Regina, Joe and Tobias will still be regulars on the KCBS competition circuit as they build the Yellow Rose Brand, too.

The Mindermans will join professional pitmasters from around the country at the Hoosier Classic at the Johnson County Fairgrounds June 9-11. The Yellow Rose Barbecue Company will be pumping out pulled pork, courtesy of Dixie Chopper Mowers and Premier Outdoor Power Equipment on Saturday the 10th beginning at 11 a.m. The public is welcome.

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‘MY DAD IS MY HERO’

Franklin vet captured during Battle of the Bulge

STORY BY CHERYL FISCUS JENKINS | PHOTOS BY DON MEYER

A favorite black hat stays close to his side and summarizes the military moment people of all ages and walks of life want to hear about from a surviving World War II veteran.

The hat reads: “POW-MIA: You Are Not Forgotten.” Cpl. Donald King remembers the day in December 1944 well.

At age 21, he was captured during the Battle of the Bulge by the Germans as a U.S. Army prisoner of war and walked endlessly the following day with no food or weapons. For five more days, he and other soldiers traveled by boxcar to the POW camp, surviving on cheese and crackers, bread, butter and syrup and being fired at by other servicemen at various times.

They arrived Dec. 25, 1944, to a mealtime staple of soup made with rotten potatoes and an uncertain future. King, who recently celebrated his 100th

birthday, has a timeline of events in captivity from his Christmas Day arrival to his April liberation Easter Sunday 1945.

He enjoys telling stories of becoming friends with another POW from Tennessee and how the U.S. Air Force shot at the camp on Feb. 6, 1945, not realizing Americans were being held hostage there. He lost 50 pounds during captivity and feels fortunate to have made it out alive.

“I never was mistreated when I got to camp,” he said. “We just stayed close together all of the time. That was the best part of it.”

King has gained much admiration and interest in his military pursuits from family and friends who know of his service history and from strangers who have seen his POW license plate. He has been hooked up with U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs benefits by a caring citizen and has been the subject of poems



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Thank you to all veterans for your service.

DONALD KING

AGE: 100

BIRTHPLACE/HOMETOWN: Jefferson County

RESIDENCE: Franklin since 1958

YEARS OF SERVICE: 1943 to 1945

BRANCH: Army

ASSIGNED UNIT: 106th Division

DUTIES: Rifleman

RANK: Corporal

MILITARY HONORS: M-1 Rifle Sharpshooter Badge; American Theater Ribbon; EAME Theater Ribbon with three bronze stars; Good Conduct Medal; Combat Infantryman Badge; Victory Medal WWII; Jon Menke Award for Military Service 2021.

FAMILY: Wife Betty King; children Jerry King, Cindy King, Melody Jordan, Susan Smith, Shirley DePrez (deceased), and one deceased infant child; six grandchildren; four great-grandchildren.

and essays by intrigued family members. His granddaughter, Sarah Smith of Madison, interviewed him in 2020 for a YouTube video about his service.

The piece gave life to the teacher's Veteran's Day social studies lesson Smith created for her seventh- and eighth-grade students. It helped the youths understand the importance of honoring servicemen and how much they endured in the military. Smith's class members were impressed King was her grandfather.

"It makes me very proud of him," she said. "His story is what has drawn me to history. What he's done and been through is really fascinating."

Great-grandson Callum Green's poem from several years ago titled, "My Great Grandpa, My Hero," describes how he bravely saved lives in the war. It gives testimony to his time at the camp and describes telegrams being sent home listing him as a POW and missing in action.

King has endured many hardships in his century of life in addition to his wartime experiences. He has buried two children, lost all of his siblings and survived the Great Depression. However, he also has many fond memories and stories to tell.

He grew up in Jefferson County near Madison and was a basketball player for Saluda High School, where he graduated in 1941. He married cheerleader Betty King July 3, 1948, and the two will celebrate

their 75th wedding anniversary this summer. The couple has four living children, six grandkids and four great-grandchildren.

After the military, King worked for Jefferson Proving Ground from 1947 to 1958, then moved to Franklin and worked for Whirlpool Corp. at Camp Atterbury until 1970. He retired in 1986 from Allied Signal.

King served as a rifleman in the Army's 106th Infantry Division 1943-1945. He attained rank of corporal and earned a host of military honors including M-1 Rifle Sharpshooter Badge, EAME Theater Ribbon with three bronze stars, Good Conduct Medal, Combat Infantryman Badge and Victory Medal WWII.

He was also honored with the Jon Menke Award for Military Service in June 2021 in Jefferson County for his outstanding work in the war and with local veterans. As a serviceman, he spent time in Scotland, England and France and also close to home at Atterbury and various stops throughout America.

These days, the Franklin resident spends

time with his family, hangs out with wife Betty, 95, and looks forward to that milestone anniversary. He refuses to eat potato soup due to the spoiled version he received in captivity and

takes care of his health.

This winter he broke a hip but has learned to maneuver freely with a wheelchair and walker.

Daughter Cindy King proudly tells endearing stories of her dad and wears a T-shirt her appreciation

expressing that reads: "WWII veteran daughter — Most people never meet their heroes. I was raised by mine." She shows much gratitude for servicemen risking their lives to fight for their country and appreciates how her father always balanced career and family.

"My dad is my hero," she said. "Not only did he risk his life for our country, like so many others so I'm grateful to them all, but he always put his family first. I will never be able to thank him enough for being such a great role model to me in so many ways."



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EYE ON THE SKY

Franklin vet finds path to aviation through the Army

STORY BY AMANDA STEVENSON-HOLMES | PHOTO BY MARK FREELAND

Doug Gray knew in high school he'd join the military, but at the time he thought it would be the Air Force.

"I told my mom 'I'm getting ready to enlist in the Air Force and my mom said, 'your dad will be so embarrassed' because he was an Army recruiter," laughed Gray.

So that's how Gray made his way into aviation through the Army.

In his time with the Army, Gray learned technical skills but also the value of camaraderie and love for country. He walked away feeling useful, especially with his unique knowledge related to nuclear, biological and chemical operations, as well as his ability to quickly tear apart and rebuild turbine engines.

When he was stationed in Germany in a field artillery unit to help enforce the Warsaw Pact, his unit was nuclear capable.

"Many people don't realize you can shoot a nuclear round out of a Howitzer," Gray said. "My job was to advise the commander on the use of nuclear weapons."

Every six months, Gray and his unit would walk the General Defense Plan and look at the terrain.

"To do that, you'd have to look at the terrain and our assignment was to nuke that area. To see that a life would change if we ever had to do our job made it stressful but somebody's got to do it," Gray said.

In Korea, when a helicopter went down in a mountainous area, Gray was the one sent in to repair it.

"I tore that engine completely apart, put it back together and it just completely amazed people they flew it out of there," said Gray.

After 10 years of active duty in the Army, Gray took his mechanical and nuclear issues experience to Eli Lilly and Company as a senior engineering specialist. During his 27 years there, Lilly sent him to small project

management school and its small projects were anything less than \$7 million.

"The attitudes I gained in the Army I applied in civilian life, and they definitely contributed to my success at Lilly," Gray said.

His sergeant experience alone helped when Lilly had issues in its Radiation Safety unit and Gray was called in to clean the place up.

"They called me a drill sergeant, but I had to wear that sergeant mentality when it was needed, and they passed federal inspection."

For those who are considering the military, Gray offered, "Expect hard work. Expect to give it your all. Expect people you would not

suspect to be your friends to be your friends. Have a respect for people who can do their job regardless of their race, regardless of their political views, regardless of their sexuality. You want someone who can do the job and get the job done."

Staying active himself, Gray is currently the pastor of Second Missionary Baptist Church in Franklin. He's extremely proud that his church involved Arthur Wilson, the second African American in the history of the United States Regular Army to reach the rank of major.

"I saw that he had a lot of awards, and he was a doctor who had treated hundreds of soldiers," Gray said. "They thought the soldiers had the flu, but it was actually the pandemic of 1918. I thought it was interesting he served during that time and no doubt

helped save lives."

Gray is also chaplain at Otterbein Franklin SeniorLife Community, president of Johnson County Ministerial Association and graduate of Leadership Johnson County at Franklin College's Signature Program.

Still with an eye on the sky but less stress, Gray is now a nationally recognized bird watcher and tour guide at The Biggest Week In American Birding, a 10-day birding festival in "The Warbler Capital of the World," Oak Harbor, Ohio.

DOUG GRAY

AGE: 62

BIRTHPLACE/HOMETOWN: Clarksville, Tenn.

RESIDENCE: Franklin

YEARS OF SERVICE: 1979 to 1989 (active), 1989 to 1992 (National Guard)

BRANCH: Army

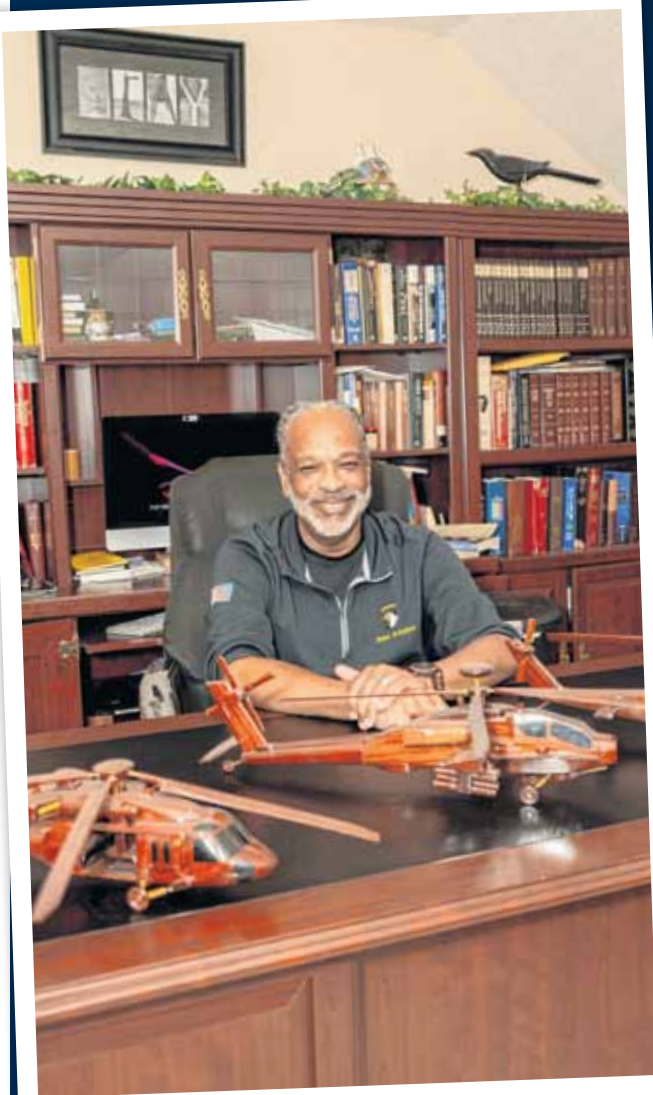
ASSIGNED UNITS: 101st Airborne Division, 2nd Infantry Division, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, 8th Infantry Division, 7th Infantry Division

DUTIES: Aircraft Mechanic, Nuclear/Biological/Chemical Operations NCO

RANK: Staff Sergeant

MILITARY HONORS: Army Commendation Medal, Army Achievement Medal, Good Conduct Medal, Overseas Ribbon, Army Service Ribbon, NCO Professional Development Ribbon, Presidential Unit Citation, Expert Marksman.

FAMILY: Wife, LeShon Gray; child, Samantha Gray

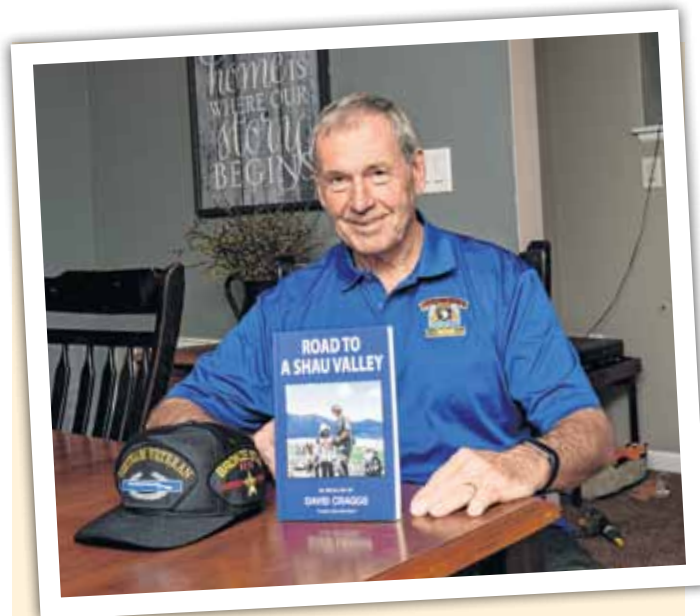


Doug Gray displays his model Army helicopters at his Franklin home.

MAKING *the* BEST OF IT

Veteran puts Vietnam experiences into book

STORY BY JENN WILLHITE | PHOTO BY MARK FREELAND



David Craggs with the book he wrote about his Vietnam service.

DAVID CRAGGS

AGE: 78
BIRTHPLACE/HOMETOWN: Hammond, Indiana
RESIDENCE: Greenwood
YEARS OF SERVICE: 1968 to 1970
BRANCH: Army
ASSIGNED UNIT: 101st Airborne Infantry, 2367 Bravo Company
DUTIES: Radio man for the platoon.
RANK: Sergeant
MILITARY HONORS: Air Medal, Combat Infantry Badge, Bronze Star.
FAMILY: Wife, Karen; Daughters, Jayme Wendel and Jennifer Childers; 2 grandchildren

When David Craggs graduated from Hammond High School in 1963, he had two choices: work at the steel mill or get drafted. Vietnam was raging and he didn't want to be drafted, so he decided to enlist.

"I was gung-ho until a good friend of mine got killed over there," Craggs recalled.

With the news, Craggs took all the military information he had and threw it in the trash alongside his enthusiasm.

He returned to college and received a two-year applied science degree in electrical engineering through the Purdue Extension office. He thought the war would be over by then. He was wrong.

Faced with the same options as before, Skaggs returned to college for a four-year degree in management and graduated.

When a proposed employment extension through Delco-Remy was denied, Skaggs was drafted into service in November 1968.

Kicking and screaming, a then 23-year-old Craggs went to basic training, he recalled.

"The kicking and screaming lasts only for about two days," he said. "Then you figure out you had better make the best of it."

Craggs arrived at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri and from there was shipped to Fort Ord in Salinas, Calif., where he was in the company of another dozen soldiers who'd been selected for infantry, he said.

"We went up to the lieutenant and he says, 'Well, either the guys will make mistakes, learn from them, make another and learn again,'" Craggs recalled. "But you guys are college grads, we know you won't make a mistake because if you do, you'll be dead," and he turned and walked away. We watched the sun go down."

Bit by bit, the guys learned they had no options in the military.

"You may say one thing, but it doesn't work," Craggs said. "Once you go to Vietnam, that is a different story."

By April, Craggs had spent eight weeks in basic training with another eight weeks in advanced individual training (AIT). Half of Craggs' group was headed to Korea, the other half to Vietnam.

Craggs was sent to Vietnam.

"We got there and didn't know what unit we would be in," he said.

From the time he stepped off the plane until the time he walked stateside again as a civilian, Craggs walked alone though he was always in a group, he said.

"When you do this, you're in with a bunch of guys you never saw before," he said. "When you get to Vietnam, you are with someone you never saw before. You aren't going as a group through all these stages; you are going through as an individual."

Much to Craggs' dismay, he became a part of the 101st Airborne.

"I said, 'Whoa, wait a minute, I'm not qualified to jump out of airplanes,'" Craggs said. "The gentleman said, 'You won't have to jump out of airplanes.' I said, 'Oh, good.' He says, 'You will be jumping out of helicopters.'"

After arriving in Northern Vietnam, Craggs was stationed with his company on a fire base, which was basically a hill in the jungle with its top cleared. They would be there 250 days.

Navigating the jungle proved a formidable task for the young recruits. The triple canopy of greenery overhead created the ambiance of a park-like area, deceptive in its calm ambiance, Craggs recalled.

"There are two types of jungle," he said. "The first type you cut through slicing vines and get about 10 feet every five minutes. The other is triple canopy where you have three layers of trees and it is like a fantastic park under those layers. You are following trails of the animals

(SEE CRAGGS PAGE 20)

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DOING *the* RIGHT THING

Family recalls service of Silver Star winning father

STORY BY JENN WILLHITE | PHOTOS BY WARRIE DENNIS

Raymond Stone was a man of integrity. The Athens, Illinois, native was drafted in 1943 during his freshman year of college and became a 1st Lieutenant with the 42nd Engineer Construction Battalion of the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers.

Stone was called to France in the European theatre of World War II in November of 1943.

Immediately upon arriving, Stone joined the 80th Infantry under Gen. Patton, recalls Stone's son-in-law Phil Snyder.

"He didn't talk about things very often," Snyder said. "On a rare occasion he would open up about things. It almost had to be a private time when you brought it up."

Stone's silence about his experience in war was understandable as it wasn't really something one shares with family or mixed company. And with five daughters, Stone's opportunities for openly talking about that period in his life were slim to none as such talk isn't meant for small ears.

When Stone arrived in France, he was a replacement rifleman who was quickly relieved of his weapon and given the armband of a medic in its place.

"When you are 20 years old, having trained with a rifle as your only line of defense and now you are one of 10 going to the front lines as a medic — I can't imagine that feeling of bewilderment," Snyder said.

Patton was asked to help relieve the city of Bastogne, which had been surrounded during the Battle of the Bulge — a story which would eventually serve as the basis for the movie "Band of



Phil and Judy Snyder, daughter and son-in-law of veteran Raymond Stone, hold a photo from Stone's time in the Army Corps of Engineers. Stone's Army coat and medals.

Brothers." Stone was in the group of 319 who were supporting in a reserve capacity for the first two units, Snyder said.

The third group was the one credited with entering Bastogne and liberating it in September 1944.

One of Stone's favorite stories came from that situation, Snyder recalled.

To stay warm, foxholes were a must. There was a mission that

had to be performed so the soldiers drew straws. Stone literally drew the short straw and was accompanied by his best friend for the mission. The two went off and completed the mission, but returned to find hell had broken loose while they were gone.

A mortar round had destroyed their foxholes.

After that, Stone said anytime

(SEE STONE PAGE 21)



RAYMOND STONE

AGE: 78 (died in 2002)

BIRTHPLACE/HOMETOWN: Athens, Illinois.

RESIDENCE: Greenwood

YEARS OF SERVICE: 1943 to 1948

BRANCH: Army Corps of Engineers

ASSIGNED UNIT: 42nd Engineer Construction Battalion

DUTIES: Medic; Platoon leader in charge of construction of the 34th General Hospital in Seoul, South Korea

RANK: 1st Lieutenant

MILITARY HONORS: Silver Star, Bronze Star, Purple Heart, Combat Medical Badge, three battle stars

FAMILY: Wife, Joan (died 2012); daughters, Judy Snyder, Susan Deal, Barbara Marbeiter, Amy Palmquist and Jennifer Stone; seven grandchildren; three great-grandchildren



Zac Augustine and his son, William, with some of Zac's military memorabilia. Zac flies the United States and Marine Corps flags outside his Greenwood home.

following in DAD'S FOOTSTEPS

Father's picture inspires young man toward Marine Corps

STORY BY JENN WILLHITE | PHOTOS BY WARRIE DENNIS

ZAC AUGUSTINE

AGE: 31

BIRTHPLACE/HOMETOWN: Chillicothe, Ohio

RESIDENCE: Greenwood

YEARS OF SERVICE: 2014 to 2019

BRANCH: Marine Corps

ASSIGNED UNIT: 2nd Combat Engineer Battalion

DUTIES: Detecting, identifying and clearing landmines and IEDs; build charges.

RANK: Sergeant

MILITARY HONORS: Driver for 2nd Marine Expeditionary Force; Navy Achievement medal.

FAMILY: Wife, Denise; daughter, Evelyn; son, William

Ever since Zac Augustine could remember, his father William's bootcamp picture hung on the refrigerator door. Augustine's mom, Jodie, kept it there as not only a tribute to her late husband's service and memory, but as a gentle reminder.

"My mom always talked about if I went into the Marine Corps and put my picture beside his, we would look like twins," 31-year-old Augustine said. "Me and my dad are spittin' images of one another."

William had completed three tours in Vietnam and later died from pancreatic cancer at the age of 40 when Zac was very young, but the seed of inspiration was planted and both Augustine and his sister, Allison, would nurture that sense of service to fruition.

"That was my main goal," Augustine said. "To follow in my dad's footsteps."

While visiting Allison's bootcamp graduation in 2014 at Parris Island, South Carolina, the structure and discipline won Augustine over and his mind was made up.

At 22-years-old Augustine enlisted in the United States Marine Corps.

His recruiter, who had also worked with Allison and knew

a bit about Augustine, grew up in the same hometown area of Chillicothe, Ohio, and used that relatability to build rapport with and help Augustine navigate what came next.

"He said I would love being a combat engineer because I would be dealing with explosives," Augustine said. "You get to build things and it is kind of like a jack of all trades but a master of none because you learn a bit of everything."

From there, Augustine went to School of Infantry East at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, for three months of training, learning basic combat navigation and engineering skills. Shortly after graduating from the schoolhouse training in 2016, Augustine became a part of a group attached to a 1st battalion on the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit that deployed to the Mediterranean Sea as part of Operation Resolve.

For the next seven months, Augustine spent a lot of boring days sitting on a boat, he said. Described as a 9-1-1 force for the American troops, Augustine's group essentially were the ones who would be called in on short notice to clear improvised explosive devices. Fortunately, they never

(SEE AUGUSTINE PAGE 22)

MY TIME IN THE SERVICE

Vet has mostly positive memories of stint in Army

STORY BY ROBERT C. POTE JR. | PHOTOS BY AMY MAY

ROBERT POTE

Age: 82
Birthplace/Hometown: Chicago
Residence: Greenwood
Years of Service: 1964 to 1966
Branch: Army
Assigned Unit: 169th Engineer Battalion
Duties: Welder/blacksmith, heavy equipment maintenance
Family: Wife, Dorothy (deceased); two children

My time in the service wasn't all that exciting as I never saw any action in Vietnam. My Army outfit did eventually go to Vietnam in 1967, but that was long after I was discharged. The Army considers me a Vietnam vet, but I always tell everyone who asks that I am a veteran so as not to take away from those who served and died there.

I was born in Chicago, Illinois, on July 26, 1941, where I lived for 22 years. I am the oldest of 15 children and we moved to northern Indiana in October of 1963, and I was told to report to Indianapolis for induction. But I received a one-month deferral because of moving to Indiana. On Jan. 10, 1964, my dad drove me to DeMotte to catch the bus to Indianapolis to be sworn in. I took basic training at Fort Knox for eight weeks, after which I was given a 15-day leave and received orders to report to my duty station at Fort. Stewart, Ga. My orders were to report to the 169th Engineer Battalion, Company D. My MOS, military occupational skill, was as a welder/blacksmith, as I was a

journeyman welder in civilian life.

In July of 1965, our outfit received orders that we were going overseas, so all those guys in the 169th who were getting discharged before Dec. 31, 1965, were pulled out and replaced with new troops from other outfits. Because I had moved to Indiana from Illinois and got a one month deferral date, my date of discharge was Jan. 10, 1966, so I got to go overseas with my unit. We were told after we boarded the troopship our destination would be Okinawa.

Preparatory to shipping out, we were all given 15 days leave to take care of personal business, etc., at home. On Oct. 25, we flew out of Hunter Air Force Base in Savannah, Ga., in two planes and arrived at the Oakland Army Terminal in California, where we boarded the troopship, The General Alexander Patch. The trip took 17 days to get to Okinawa, with a 24-hour stopover in Hawaii, where I got to see Pearl Harbor and Diamond Head. When I boarded the ship I only had 98 days left before I was

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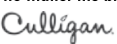
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getting discharged. I saw a lot of other guys from other outfits that were going to Vietnam.

Our C.O., commanding officer, told us there was about 5,000 troops on board the ship. When we crossed the international dateline, everybody on board received a neat little card commemorating that. I still have mine. We also were told that a helicopter would fly out our mail, which some of us believed, me included. It was just a joke, as we were probably a thousand miles from anywhere. After 17 days, we landed at Okinawa and were marched to some barracks close to Suciran, Okinawa. We unloaded our equipment at the Port of Naha and set up shop at our motor pool area.

On Dec. 21, 1965, I was told to turn in my welding equipment and related gear, as I was getting ready to go back to the States to get discharged. I flew back to the states on a MATS plane with other soldiers and dependents arriving at Oakland, Calif. 16 hours later. When I arrived at Oakland, I had five days travel time to get back to Fort Stewart, where I was to be discharged.

On Dec. 24, Christmas Eve, I was in Oakland, so I flew first-class to Chicago's O'Hare, then boarded a twin-engine plane for a short hop to Weir Cook. When I landed, I called my folks to pick me up. They were surprised, as they thought I was still in Okinawa.

I spent Christmas at home, then used the balance of my ticket to get back to Fort Stewart. I had about 11 or 12 days left before discharge and pulled KP two days before I got out, but that didn't bother me.

I have great memories of my time in the service and the guys I served with. I think they should bring back the Peacetime Draft, as two years isn't that great a sacrifice to serve your country. My dad served in World War II. My uncle, who recently died at age 98, was wounded in Germany, in WWII. My next youngest brother served in Iraq and retired as a sergeant major. My youngest brother served in Desert Storm and his son served in Afghanistan.

I am a widower now, retired from G.M, and 81 years old.



Above: Robert Pote at his Greenwood home. Right: Pote's service photo from the Army.

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CRAGGS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

that basically travel on the top of the ridge."

The men only knew one another by their nicknames. Craggs' was Purdue. With him in the jungle were Cowboy, Roundhouse, Goober and Hoss, to name a few.

Craggs' first jump from the helicopter was a bit anticlimactic from five feet off the ground. Adrenaline and excitement of the moment delivered him safely to the ground carrying a 100-pound pack on his back when he ran directly into a sapling tree that knocked him to the ground onto his back.

Once the perimeter is set up, you start going through the jungle walking point, Craggs said. Following the trails wherever they took them, the guys would get up in the mornings and fill their foxhole from the night before.

Supplies came every five days. Most of the time food and ammunition would be dropped for the troops, but they had to find their own water.

"You may be out of water for a day or two," Craggs recalled. "You are out there in the jungle with no one else around, hopefully."

From cannibalizing ants to giant snakes, Craggs and his fellow soldiers encountered a number of natural predators and circumstances.

"When someone says, 'Were you afraid of this or that?' No, you just did what you did on a day-to-day basis," Craggs said. "Fear goes away, you don't have it. My answer is, we didn't have time to be afraid."

During one ambush, Craggs and the others were held down for four days on the west side of the A Shau Valley. Seeing high ground in front of their position, Craggs dug an extra big foxhole.

They were ambushed at 10:30 a.m. the next day. A rocket hit near their position. Hitting the sandy, loose soil, the rocket didn't explode on impact but traveled up the hill and hit an armored personnel carrier, killing a soldier.

"We were going to be the next guys to relieve those on Hamburger Hill," Craggs said. "After those four days, it was over by the time Hamburger Hill was over."

There was no hand-to-hand combat. Instead, shots were fired from the cleared hilltop and immediate area into the dense jungle surrounding it.

Vietnamese soldiers had the advantage as they were the only ones who could see at whom they were shooting.

Craggs recalls shooting into the dense

brush without knowing if he'd struck anyone.

"Hamburger Hill was such a messed-up operation that after that we basically went from a search and destroy mission to a search and avoid mission," Craggs said.

When it was time to return home, the guys kept their relief and excitement contained.

Each soldier received a number and it was his duty to get on the plane when his number was called.

"I get on the plane, it taxis and goes to take off and you can hear a pin drop," Craggs said. "It started down the runway, lifts off and when that thing lifts off and you are airborne everyone cheered. I don't remember a thing all the way home."

Craggs wrote home every day. Nearly all the letters were addressed to his mother, with an occasional letter addressed solely to his dad as to not upset his mother with raw talk about the situation on the ground.

She saved every letter and those became the basis of Cragg's book, "Road to the A Shau Valley," published in September 2022.

Written at the behest of his fellow servicemen, Craggs wanted to share their story.

"I guess the biggest thing was it was my experiences, but I didn't want it to

be my story," he said. "It is the story of the guys I was with, like Hoss and his experience with a hornet's nest while on patrol. It was more a human-interest story than about me."

Cragg's wife, Karen, met him after he returned home from overseas and said his writing the book served as a type of therapy for him.

"It just seemed like a weight had been lifted off him by writing the book," she said. "David is, himself, like an open book. He cares deeply about the people in the book."

Karen is grateful to be a party to and have witnessed the initial reunion of Craggs and his fellow service members, she said. To see the five remaining men of her husband's unit all in the same place brought tears to her eyes.

"They bonded, they cried," she said. "It was probably one of the most touching moments of my life watching this as an outsider. They were so shunned when they came home. It is a Godlink that these guys can get together, walk down memory lane, and it is therapy."

The COVID-19 pandemic became the catalyst for Craggs to put pen to paper, he said.

"I thought better do it now," he said. "We aren't going to live forever."



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STONE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

they asked for volunteers, he volunteered.

During the Battle of the Bulge, Stone was stationed in Luxembourg, Germany, as a medic. The group came under attack while trying to destroy a bridge and there were a number of casualties. Under sharp shooter protection, Stone helped retrieve the casualties.

Near the end of his 10 total trips, they passed by a soldier they thought had perished. The soldier called out, "Hey! What about me?"

They transported the wounded man along with the others to Dahl where they stayed overnight in a building basement with potato sacks on the floor.

"He stayed with that gentleman all night," Snyder said.

Stone received a Silver Star for his actions that day, though he would always minimize his role when he'd recount the story.

Stone's skills and abilities during his military service spoke for themselves and even led to a recommendation for an Army commission. However, his engineering experience wasn't from the classroom and he didn't hold a degree so he was passed over.

When he returned home as a civilian, Stone went back to the University of Illinois to earn a degree in mechanical engineering and went to work for Kawneer - an architectural firm specializing in aluminum fabrication.

Stone would retire from his position as senior vice



Memorabilia the Snyder family has of Raymond Stone's service.



president from Kawneer in the 1990s.

Stone's oldest daughter, Judy, recalls what it was like during those early days when her dad worked for Kawneer. The various positions Stone held during his tenure with the company required a lot of travel and even relocating his family to Germany at one point for a brief two-year stint before returning to the States. It was the move to Germany that still stands out to her to this day.

"It was quite upsetting at first," Judy said. "We went to a British school on the air base near a German town and had a house there. We weren't really welcomed at first because you have to do it yourself - you go door to door and introduce yourself before they will even pay attention to you."

The family soon grew accustomed to the region's

customs,

however, Judy's four younger siblings seemed to struggle a bit to adjust.

"We moved about every three years with the company and had friends all over," she said.

More than 20 years following his sudden death due to complications from emergency surgery, Judy recalled her father as a very honest and dedicated person who had tremendous integrity about him.

Snyder echoed his wife's sentiment.

"He was just an amazing guy who had to do so much at so young an age," Snyder said. "I have extreme admiration for him. He had integrity and you could always count on a gentleman like that. He would always do the right thing."



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AUGUSTINE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17

got a call.

"The Navy Seals were in Syria advising the Afghan army of airstrikes," Augustine said. "So, they would come aboard the ship, get a fresh bite to eat, shower up and they were off again. We were like a floating base, more or less."

The ship ported a few times with stops in Spain and Greece for a few days each stint while restocking before setting sail again.

It was about seven months later that Augustine returned stateside and landed the role of a lifetime for someone in his position.

Out of a pool of roughly 44,000 potential candidates, Augustine was selected as Lt. Gen. Robert Hedelund's driver.

"It was definitely a big deal if a general comes to your unit," Augustine said. "The next thing you know I'm with the general driving him, listening to conversations, classified information. Wow, I'm a sergeant and I'm rolling with the big dogs."

In his new role, Augustine met many high-ranking military and government officials, he recalled, including James "Mad Dog" Mattis.

Augustine was included in everything during the roughly year-long special assignment, he remembers, from mundane conversation and meetings to the annual formal ball and banquet.

The luxury of being stateside and able to stay at home with his wife, Denise, was a welcomed change. Among his main goals as driver was conducting route reconnaissance and managing the general's schedule, he said.

If a trip was planned, Augustine would drive it before the general ever got in the car in order to get an idea of a timeline for the trip and identify possible alternative routes should an emergency occur.

It was a big change of pace as Augustine was no longer surrounded by others of the same rank, he said, instead he was interacting with first sergeants, sergeant generals and majors.

"I worked kind of directly with NCIS, which is the Navy Criminal Investigative Services," Augustine said. "When the deputy directors came in or the commandant of the Marine Corps, NCIS would take the lead, but I would be in the group of vehicles."

Without hesitation, Augustine said he would have stayed in the position had it been possible.

Until he was told about it, Augustine was unaware

the driver's position even existed, he recalls.

Augustine's wife, Denise, said from the time of his first deployment, she knew she would have to become the family's backbone — at least to a degree.

Many times, he would be deployed for days or weeks on end leaving her to hold the family homestead together solo. It was essential she find her "tribe" of those who could relate, she said. She found that staying positive and healthy was instrumental to her being a supportive spouse.

"You have to be able to have people you can depend on, whether it's just a quick call to a family member or friend," she said. "Make sure you take care of yourself. You can't pour from an empty cup."

The childhood sweethearts married shortly after Augustine joined the Marines and Denise said the military helped her husband mature and find his strengths.

She said Augustine "found his true belonging" when he joined and immediately adopted a leadership role and became a big brother to the younger recruits with whom he was serving.

"He really matured and had to learn how to handle tough situations and conversations with those boys to help them become the best version of themselves," Denise said. "He really enjoys the sense of teamwork and belonging."

Today Augustine works as a chemical operator for Eli Lilly and is also a reserve deputy for the Johnson County Sheriff's Office. Looking back on his military career, he said the experience taught him much.

The father of two said his military experience was about the camaraderie. It is about learning to not be a selfish person and adhering to the tenets of the Marine Corps: honor, courage and commitment.

"It makes me appreciate the time I have with my family, the people I work with and the ones I care about," Augustine said. "When I was deployed, or even just relating it to, you are gone and don't have that opportunity to call your buddy and say, 'I'm struggling.' You gotta lean on the guy to your left and right; you are there for each other."

Just as he offered guidance and leadership to the younger service members with whom he served, Augustine said those entertaining the idea of joining the military should follow their heart, he said.

"If you feel like you are called to join, do it," he said. "It's a short amount of time of your life and there are so many lessons you learn from being in the military. Contracts vary, but it is a small piece of your life that goes by really quickly. It makes you appreciate more things in life."



Zac Augustine has several pieces of military memorabilia and decor around his home.

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A photograph of a soldier in camouflage kneeling in a cemetery, surrounded by American flags. The soldier is in the background, slightly out of focus, with his hand to his face in a moment of reflection. Several American flags are in the foreground, some on stands and some lying on the grass. The scene is set in a cemetery with white headstones visible in the background.

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