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Register

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11/11



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Paying tribute to all American veterans, here and gone

On the 11th hour, of the 11th day, of the 11th month in 1918, an armistice, or agreement to stop fighting, was reached between the Allied nations and Germany in World War I.

One year later, President Woodrow Wilson declared that Nov. 11, 1919, was a day to remember Americans for their military service in World War I. He called it Armistice Day. He suggested that Americans celebrate with parades and perhaps a “brief suspension of business” around 11 a.m. President Wilson also hoped it would be a time when Americans offered prayers of thanksgiving for those who had served and for peace for all times.

■ President Wilson originally intended Armistice Day to be observed one time, but many states decided to observe it every year to honor World War I veterans.

■ Congress followed the states’ lead and in 1938 declared that every Nov. 11 would be observed as Armistice Day.

■ Congress changed the name to Veterans Day in 1954 to honor veterans of

all wars.

■ For a brief time, 1971-1974, Veterans Day was observed on the fourth Monday in October. Since 1975, Veterans Day is always observed on Nov. 11.

■ If Nov. 11 falls on a Saturday or Sunday, the federal government observes the holiday on the previous Friday or following Monday, respectively.

■ Nov. 11, 1921, when the first of the unknown soldiers was buried in Arlington National Cemetery, unidentified soldiers also were laid to rest at Westminster Abbey in London and at the Arc de Triomphe in Paris.

■ Memorial Day, the fourth Monday in May, honors American service members who died in service to their country.

■ Veterans Day pays tribute to all American veterans, living or dead, but especially gives thanks to living veterans who served their country honorably during war or peacetime.

– From the Missouri Press Foundation

Veterans Day goes virtual

BROOKINGS – The Brookings Area Chamber of Commerce Military Affairs Committee is proud to honor the nation’s veterans with an annual program. This year has been unlike any other, but as they say, “the show must go on.”

This year’s program will be presented virtually on Wednesday, Nov. 11. Viewers can tune in to the local cable Channel 9 at 11 a.m. or watch the recording on YouTube or Facebook live via the Brookings Area Chamber of Commerce channels.

The virtual program will be hosted by Kari Westlund, master of ceremo-

nies, and the audience will hear from Brig. Gen. Keith Corbett, known to many as “Mayor.”

The purpose of the Brookings Area Chamber of Commerce Military & Veterans Affairs Committee is to promote a positive working relationship among the community, employers, and area veterans and military groups.

For more information, contact the Brookings Area Chamber of Commerce at 692-8922 or email info@brookingschamber.org.

– From the Brookings Area Chamber of Commerce

24-hour vigil starts Saturday

BROOKINGS – The Arnold Air Society Bernie V. Guthrie Squadron will host a 24-hour vigil at the Brookings County Veterans Memorial from 11 a.m. Saturday, Nov. 14, to 11 a.m. Sunday, Nov. 15.

This celebration, held in honor of Veterans Day, is a longstanding tradition, with Air Force ROTC cadets volunteering to keep watch.

The opening ceremony will be held at 11 a.m. Saturday, and the closing ceremony will be held at 11 a.m. Sunday. The changing of the guard will occur every 30 minutes.

Due to COVID-19, seating will not be provided for the closing ceremony; however, there will be a drive-up option available for all spectators. The entire ceremony will be livestreamed on the SDSU Air Force ROTC Det 780 Facebook page, accessible to all, <https://www.facebook.com/sdsuafrotc>.

Join in appreciation of the brave men and women who have faithfully served their country, past and present, no matter the cost.

– From Arnold Air Society at SDSU



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General, dean, councilor and mayor

■ Brookings mayor exemplifies a life of service

By JOHN KUBAL
The Brookings Register

BROOKINGS – Town, gown, country. For Brookings Mayor Keith Corbett, life has been defined by a dedication to duty in that trio of arenas.

Town: He has served on the Brookings City Council and since 2017 has served as mayor. Gown: As student, ROTC cadet, educator, professor of military science, assistant college dean and then college dean at South Dakota State University. Country: A 35-year military career that culminated in promotion to brigadier general and assignment as the assistant adjutant general, South Dakota Army National Guard.

Further recognition of Corbett's achievements in those arenas came in October, when he was selected by SDSU as one of six 2020-2021 Distinguished Alumni.

A native of Watertown, Corbett grew up and graduated from high school there. A hint of his future military career began early as a member of Civil Air Patrol: "I enjoyed it, a great group of mentors."

Next came SDSU: "(Air Force) ROTC was there, and it was a great opportunity."


During his junior year, he married Roxanne Kroeger. "We got that \$100-a-month stipend (for



Courtesy photo

Brig. Gen. Keith Corbett, assistant adjutant general, South Dakota National Guard, met with General Mercour, Suriname, on a visit to that South American nation in 2008.

See **CORBETT**, page 4



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CORBETT: Served in New Orleans after hurricane

Continued from page 3

ROTC),” he recalled. “That was a big deal then.”

In 1976, Corbett graduated from SDSU with a Bachelor of Science degree in chemistry and was commissioned a second lieutenant in the United States Air Force. He served a brief tour with the 934 Air Wing in Minneapolis. The Air Force, however, was not to be his military career. He transferred to the SDANG in December 1983.

On the way to his star

“I had to start all over again as a second lieutenant,” Corbett said of his decision to go Army Guard. He would serve until 1987 as commander of Headquarters Detachment, 139th Transportation Battalion. Meanwhile, he graduated from SDSU in 1987 with a Master of Education degree in educational leadership.

His parallel careers in both military service and education would move steadily forward and upward. Additional command assignments included: 1742nd Transportation Company; 665th Maintenance Company; and 88th Troop Command.

In a fashion, military service and education intersected from June 1999 to June 2002, when Corbett served as professor of military science in the Army ROTC program at SDSU. He was recognized for procuring additional scholarships for

cadets in the program. For that he thanked then President Peggy Gordon Miller, now retired Vice President for Academic Affairs Carol Peterson and the late Mike Reger, then executive vice president of administration.

“They really valued the program, tremendous supporters,” Corbett said. “And the program numbers started to go up.” Meanwhile, during this time, he accomplished a milestone in his own education: a Doctor of Education degree in strategic leadership from the University of South Dakota in 2001.

Then on a fall day in 2001, the lieutenant colonel got a double dose of good news: selection for “bird colonel” and for a year of study at the Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania. “It was kind of a nice day,” Corbett said. He would begin classes in July 2003 and graduate in June 2004.

He returned to the Guard and some short stints of active duty. His Guard assignment from July 2003 to July 2004 was as facilities management officer, State Area Command South Dakota, in Rapid City. Following that, Corbett served two years, until 2006, as deputy state area commander, Joint Forces Headquarters South Dakota, in Rapid City. As deputy, he would get one of the most interesting and rewarding assignments during one of those short stints of active duty in September 2005.

“They needed people to go to Katrina,”

he said. “I went down (to New Orleans) for about three to four months to work with Lt. Gen. Russel L. Honoré, commander, Joint Task Force Katrina.”

The JTF, under the command of “The Ragin’ Cajun,” was responsible for coordinating military relief efforts for Hurricane Katrina.

“You’re really active duty, but you’re still a member of the South Dakota Army National Guard,” Corbett explained.

On June 22, 2006, he would get his star: selection for promotion to brigadier general, the rank at which he would retire as assistant adjutant general. With the added responsibility that comes with being a general came additional leadership opportunities and some of the most interesting assignments of his days in uniform.

In June 2008, he served as commander of the Operation Golden Coyote in the Black Hills, a war game participated in by about 4,100 soldiers from 27 states: Army Reserve, Marines and National Guard and troops from other allied nations

“That was a pretty good deal,” Corbett explained. “We had troops from Germany and Canada; we had three Brits. It was a real opportunity for (combined) forces.”

He would retire from military service in 2011, but he still had work to do at SDSU. In July of that year he was named dean of SDSU’s University College, which has a focus on student success and retention; prior to its creation, he had served as assis-

tant dean and then as interim dean of the College of General Studies. He retired from SDSU in 2017 and was named an emeritus dean at the time. However, his service to town and gown continues.

While serving on the Brookings City Council, Corbett was elected mayor in 2017. With the coming of the coronavirus pandemic, which the city met with such mandates as masks and social distancing, he admits he is facing his “biggest challenge as mayor.”

“It divided our community,” the mayor said. “Brookings has always been a strong community together. I think we are probably closer together than people will admit. But some people are hanging their hat on ‘my freedoms.’ And I understand. But the majority are saying, ‘Thank you.’ We’ve got to protect ourselves. We’ve got to listen to the science, not emotions.

“And it’s tough. I couldn’t tell you how many profanity-laced emails I’ve gotten. That was probably the most disappointing to me.

“Because some of those people are people that I see walking around. I’m a Christian, and I don’t see how you get by using profanity in your language.

“But the bottom line is we’re keeping our people safe. I’m feeling good; people are very supportive and are coming together.”

Contact John Kubal at jkubal@brookingsregister.com.



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You got questions, he's got answers

■ Holzhauser: Veteran serving other veterans

By JOHN KUBAL
The Brookings Register

BROOKINGS – If you're a veteran living in Brookings County and you've got questions about what your military service earned you in entitlements, your go-to guy is Michael Holzhauser. An Army veteran himself, he's the Brookings County veterans services officer – in a job where being a veteran is a prerequisite.

A native of Agar, he grew up and graduated from high school there in 1976. A month later he enlisted in the United States Army. The draft had ended in 1973, during the Nixon administration, and was replaced by the AVF (All Volunteer Force).

"I signed up specifically for the education benefits," Holzhauser, 62, said. "I knew that was my one chance to go to school. And there's a certain sense of duty, you know."

A friend suggested he go into air traffic control. He did and served in that



Michael Holzhauser

specialty for two years. He followed that with two years as a photographer. Finally, he went on to serve five years in the National Guard, four of them while he was attending the University of South Dakota, where he earned a bachelor's degree in business administration, grad-

uating in 1985.

"I started out with accounting," he explained. "I think my family's the only one where everyone has taken income tax. When I took personal income tax, I decided I no longer wanted to be an accountant."

Laughing, he added, "All four of them, my wife and my children and I have taken personal income tax and every one of us has hated it."

So after that, Holzhauser switched to administration.

Working for the state

Following gradation, he went to work for the state in the Welfare Office in Mission (Todd County), "food stamps in particular." Meanwhile, in 1987, he married Ann Kratochvil, whom he had met while attending college. He lived in Colorado at the time and got out of the Guard there. He and Ann had their children there.

They moved back to Pierre so they "could raise the kids closer to her parents and my parents."

In 2010, he replaced retiring Lionel Torgrude as Brookings County veterans services officer.

"I'd been with the state for 16 years, and I knew if I came over here that I'd be able to increase my retirement after three years," Holzhauser explained. He could

retire at any time; but for now that's not in the cards.

"The reason I'm staying here is that I really like my job," he added. "They say if you enjoy your job, you'll never work a day in your life. I've been blessed by the (county) commissioners and by God that I have this job and keep this job and I've had my health."

"Not every day is rosy by any means, but it's always given me a lot of satisfaction," Holzhauser said.

DD 214: 'the magic document'

Even in the digital information age in which we live, there is still one piece of paper that is important to every veteran: The DD Form 214, Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty, aka simply as a "DD 214."

"It is the magic document," Holzhauser explained. "It is the one form that proves that you did serve and that you have an honorable discharge. When you record it with the register of deeds that is as good as the original document."

While it is obvious that the original DD 214 should be safeguarded by the veteran, it is also strongly recommended that it be recorded with the register of deeds in the county where the veteran

See **HOLZHAUSER**, page 6

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HOLZHAUSER: Helping veterans utilize their benefits

Continued from page 5

lives.

One of the biggest parts of Holzhauser's job on a day-to-day basis is "dealing with veterans who are wanting to get into the VA health care system, with hearing aids ... one of the harder things to get, but also one of the things most sought-after."

Why?

"Because when you get hearing aids through the VA, usually because of a service-connected hearing loss, they're free of charge," he explained. "That's a very big plus."

However, there are only two criteria that qualify for getting hearing aids: "either a hearing loss related to military service or if your VA doctor says you need them to understand their directions for your medical care. Those are the only two ways."

Continuing, Holzhauser added, "Once you have a service-connected disability for anything that is rated over 10 percent, then hearing aids and eyeglasses are part of what you get for VA health care."

To get into the VA health system, a veteran must have a ser-

vice-connected disability or meet income guidelines.

The position of county veterans service officer was created near or at the end of World War II, he explained, "because they knew that the veterans would be getting out and government paperwork is confusing. Every county in the state of South Dakota has to have one to assist veterans in filing for the benefits they've earned because of their service."

For higher-education benefits, colleges and universities will have representatives to assist veteran students in applying. Holzhauser does not work with those veterans and admits the process can be "very complicated." However, he will assist them in getting other benefits they have earned.

Among other areas for which veterans still seek assistance or guidance, "housing is still a big one," Holzhauser said. He also provides information about death benefits.

Overall, he estimates about four requests a day from veterans come through his office; some veterans require more than one visit.

Contact John Kubal at jkubal@brookingsregister.com.



John Kubal/Register

Michael Holzhauser's Brookings County Veterans Affairs Office is the place to go for veterans with questions about their benefits.



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Giving the Army a chance

■ A pair of careers: soldier and teacher

By JOHN KUBAL
The Brookings Register

BROOKINGS – Born a Canuck in Edmonton (Alberta) in 1943 during World War II, David Zoelle would later opt for American citizenship and go on to serve 27 years in the United States Army – and follow that with a second career as a high school English teacher.

His father was working for Northwest Airlines at the time of his birth. And the Japanese had invaded the Aleutian Islands in June 1942; they stayed until August 1943.

“The Army Air Corps had no experience flying in cold weather, in any way shape or form,” Zoelle explained. “Northwest was flying into Anchorage, Alaska, and then into Russia. Northwest was in effect loaned to the Army Air Corps. My father got caught up in that and was sent to Edmonton to be flight operations and dispatcher.”

Zoelle senior later moved the family to Farmington, Minnesota. They lived on a 1,000-acre “hobby farm,” which his father worked with a partner while he continued to work for Northwest. David and Frank, his late older brother and only sibling, worked the farm.

David described himself as “quite an athlete: a football player, basketball player, and a track participant.” He graduated from



David Zoelle

Farmington High School in 1961.

“I had kind of a dual citizenship at the time,” he said of those coming-of-age years. “But at the age of 21, I chose to be an American citizen.”

Playing for keeps

Zoelle had a coach who coordinated with a football coach at University of Wisconsin (River Falls), and he went there to play football. But not for long.

“I got hurt in a game during the first year, and that was the end off my football career,” Zoelle said. “It was nothing like I played in high school; they were playing for keeps.”

He would finish his second year at U of W and transfer to University of Northern Colorado (Greeley). He focused on social studies with a minor in English

and graduated in 1966 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in secondary education.

Zoelle completed basic training; he followed that with infantry training and Officer Candidate School. He graduated OCS and was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Signal Corps in 1967. Vietnam was not far off. After some additional training, he was assigned to a signal detachment supporting the 525th Military Intelligence Group.

“It supported the entire theater with military intelligence,” Zoelle explained. He did a year-long tour, from 1968 to 1969, “in and around the Saigon area.”

Military communication at that time and place was pretty basic; “nothing but teletype stuff, 66 words a minute,” he added.

The intelligence his unit gathered was passed to combat units and provided heads-up information.

Control over his destiny

Following his return to the U.S. in July 1969, Zoelle found that he “liked the military ... decided to give the Army another chance” and “asked them to send me to Germany.”

The Army did him one better, assigning him to the 66th Military Group in Munich, “the city I asked for.” The group was responsible for the entire European Theater.

“Because I was with the MI (military intelligence) in Vietnam, I was assigned as the group signal officer,” he explained. “I was an Army captain filling a lieutenant colonel’s position on that group staff.” He would be on the job from 1969 to 1971.

Having given the Army a chance, Zoelle came to believe that a career in the Army would give him the opportunity to have some control over his destiny. His first step was a request to go to graduate school. The Army filled it.

He went to Colorado State University (Fort Collins) and earned a master’s degree in broadcast management. He would put the skills he learned there, along with those learned at the Public Affairs Officers Course and the Broadcast Managers Course, to use in a variety of major armed forces media assignments that included: chief of Media News Division for the Hometown News Service at Kelly Air Force Base, San Antonio; commander of Southern European Broadcasting System, Vincenzo, Italy “the apex of my military career”; and his last Army assignment, as director of the Broadcasting Department for

the Defense Broadcast Managers Course in Indianapolis.

Zoelle retired as a lieutenant colonel on Aug. 31, 1992, with 27 years of service. Next came a second career.

From one combat zone to another

What are you going to do? That was the question Zoelle asked himself as he transitioned out of uniform and into mufti. With his degree in education, teaching seemed the answer.

“In 1993, I started teaching for the first time in my life,” he said. For six years, he taught English at an Indianapolis high school in a “magnet school program for at-risk students.”

It was a challenging assignment. Zoelle laughed a bit as he talked of “gang members who had their colors hanging out of the back of their pants. ... I never turned my back on them for the six years I was there. It was tough; it was really, really tough.”

Following his first year, he told the principal, “I feel like I’ve come from one combat zone to another.” However, his next teaching job would be a “wonderful, wonderful experience.”

From 1999 to 2005, he taught English, American literature, speech and drama at the Marion-Adams Schools Corporation in Sheridan, Indiana.

Zoelle retired from teaching in 2005 and moved to Brookings in 2007 to be near family in Sioux Falls. He lives on acreage with his daughter, Dana.

He’s active in the VFW, Disabled American Veterans, and the South Dakota Chapter of Rolling Thunder.

Contact John Kubal at jkubal@brookingsregister.com.

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Artillery: 'king of battle' in Vietnam

■ '13 Bravo' vet spent 13 months in-country

By JOHN KUBAL
The Brookings Register

BROOKINGS – No thanks, don't want to be a "tunnel rat."

"Not liking spiders, not liking snakes and a little claustrophobic, it was easy for me to turn my back on that offer," said Lionel Torgrude, 72, then in the Army, now retired and living in Volga. His time in Vietnam would be spent with artillery, known in military circles around the world as "king of battle."

A native of Sinai, Torgrude grew up there and graduated from Brookings High School in 1966. Next came a couple years of college at Black Hills State University. Then came an offer he couldn't refuse: his draft notice.

"Back in those days, we were pretty undecided about what we wanted to do," he said.

In 1969, he went into the Army. First came boot camp at Fort Lewis, Washington, followed by advanced individual training at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, as a "13 Bravo" (artilleryman).

He called that time period uneventful, except for one event unrelated to that point in his life: "I do remember sitting in the barracks at the time of the lunar landing (on July 20, 1969)."

Laughing, he added, "All of us were questioning if it was real or not. That was before fake news. It was just one of those unbelievable events in our lifetime, I guess."

Supporting the 'queen of battle'

Not surprisingly, Torgrude's next stop was Vietnam; he arrived in ("I'm guessing") September 1969 and was assigned to Bravo Battery, 7/11 Artillery, 25th Infantry Division ("Tropic Lightning"). While artillery is king of battle, infantry is queen.

"We were stationed in and around Tay Ninh Province, northwest of Saigon," Torgrude recalled. "Our mission was to support the infantry. In most cases that support amounted to us traveling with them. We would follow and set up a small fire support base and provide fire support for them on their missions, patrols, whatever."

That might last for a couple of days, and then the unit would again be on the move.

The 7/11 did have a secure semi-permanent fire support base that smaller units would move out of in support of the infantry. Each battery had six 105mm howitzers, with a range of about 7 miles, very accurate and usually deployed as a single unit. Torgrude did note that sometimes the battery could be split into two units of three guns each. He recalled one instance where three guns were deployed on a river barge and provided fire support to troops ashore.

On most occasions the guns were deployed to the field by helicopter.

"We rode in the chopper and they would set the cannon down on the ground and then move over and set us down," he explained. "Sometimes we would be in a different chopper, so we would be there to unhook them."

Vietcong controlled the night

The gun crews tried to work in 12-hour shifts of six men per cannon; that didn't always work out.

"One of the things I learned early on in Vietnam is that there was no start of a day or end of a day, especially when you're trying to work shifts," Torgrude said. "You get a firing mission when you're resting or supposed to be sleeping."

Explaining how a firing mission worked, he cited some specifics: "Each of the shells weighed about 33 pounds; each



Lionel Torgrude

See **TORGRUDE**, page 11



Courtesy photo

Lionel Torgrude takes a break in the action, during his tour as an artilleryman in Vietnam.

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By Joanna Fuchs



Jim Schmitz, LHAU,
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TORGRUDE: 23 years as VSO

Continued from page 10

gun was capable of shooting about 10 rounds per minute for a short period of time. But on a long fire mission, a couple hours or several hours, about three rounds per minute was what we averaged."

Except for time spent at their semi-permanent fire support base, Torgrude and his unit were "on the move, sometimes into Cambodia, out of Cambodia."

About halfway through his 13 1/2-month tour of duty, he went from firing the guns to working in the fire direction center: "You're still with the guns; you're the one who computes the data."

While describing the different types of ammunition the guns fired, Torgrude talked about how illumination rounds could "make daylight, for a few minutes anyway, and give us an advantage, because the Vietcong really controlled the night."

Helping his fellow veterans

Torgrude returned to United States, California, 50 years ago Nov. 11. Unlike the unpleasant welcome some veterans experienced, his return to South Dakota was a pleasant one.

"An advantage upon return, coming home to rural South Dakota, I did not experience some of the difficulties that a lot of the veterans did," Torgrude recalled. "Coming into Sinai, you were welcomed back and thanked for your service. My membership in the local (American)

Legion was paid for."

He had been drafted for two years. His military service was over; he had no requirement to spend time in a reserve status.

"I was done," he said.

Using his G.I. Bill benefits, he returned to college at Dakota State University and earned a degree in social sciences.

Now retired from working for the state, he spent 23 years as Brookings County veterans services officer.

"Getting to know my veterans and hearing some of their stories were the most rewarding parts of my job," Torgrude said.

"I have one regret, and that's that I didn't do some taping: I had a couple World War I vets. I sat with one of them four hours one day, not even realizing it had been that long. He shared story after story after story." He was in the Army and taking part in what historians at one time called "the war to end all wars."

In the case of one family, he served veterans from four generations: World I, World War II, Vietnam and the Gulf War.

"You'll never forget the sights and sounds," he said, looking back to his own in-country Vietnam days. "One of those sounds was the whup, whup, whup, whup of blades on a helicopter. "It was kind of a love-hate relationship; because they took you to the field but they also brought you back."

Lionel now lives a relaxed retirement with his wife Fran. They have three sons and seven grandchildren.

Contact John Kubal at jkubal@brookingsregister.com.



Courtesy photos

Top, a crew makes ready as a "king of battle" howitzer prepares to fire some rounds. Above, the whup, whup, whup, whup of helicopter blades announces the airlift arrival of a cannon to a battleground in Vietnam.

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Remembering his ‘Forgotten War’

■ Daughter helps her dad recall a year in Korea

By JOHN KUBAL
The Brookings Register

BROOKINGS – Our nation’s oldest veterans of World War II are now in their 90s.

So, too, are some who served in Korea, ‘The Forgotten War’ that began 70 years ago, in June 1950, and ended – sort of – in July 1953 with an armistice. No peace treaty has ever been signed.

One of those forgotten-war veterans is 94-year-old Martin Bosch of Brookings. Born in Sibley, Iowa, in 1926, the Hawkeye would soon be coming to South Dakota. His mother died when he was 2 years old.

“When I was 3 years old, they fostered me out to some people and they moved up here to Bushnell,” Bosch said. He moved in and lived with the Van Klei family.

While he took the family’s name, he was never adopted. “I went by their name for years,” he said. “But they just fostered me.”

He lived with his foster parents on a farm south of Elkton and grew up, went to school and worked on the Van Klei farm. Bosch noted that he “never got to high school, just through eighth grade.”

He left the farm in 1950 and went to work for International Harvester. Then the Korean War started on June 25, and Bosch was soon drafted. And in a circuitous fashion, he would get there and become part of it.

A long trip to Japan

Bosch’s first stop was Fort

Polk, Louisiana, for basic training. He was a member of an active duty Army unit, one of several that would be assigned to reinforce the 45th Infantry Division of the Oklahoma Army National Guard. In August 1950, it became the first division to train at Polk in preparation for the Korean War.

Additionally, it would be a smaller unit of the 45th that Bosch would serve with during a year-long tour in Korea. His daughter, Sherilyn Bosch, has recorded and written down some of her father’s wartime experiences as he recalled them; however, some of the dates and details are approximations and not necessarily exact.

“I left for Korea in 1951. We left Camp Polk and headed for the port of New Orleans. From New Orleans it took us two days to get south to the Panama Canal. ... The third day we finally got into the lifts. It took us three hours to get through the two-part system.

“From the canal we sailed up to San Francisco. This took us 10 days. So now we’ve been on the ship for 15 days and haven’t even left the shoreline! We sat in port for 24 hours while they loaded the ship for the trip to Japan. We weren’t allowed off the ship at this time.

“Finally, we were ready to sail for (Hokkaido) Japan. This would take us about 14 days.

“Once we got over there ... we spent about six months in Japan. ... We lived in Tent City when we got there. Everyone lived in tents.

“For the six months we were there, we went through training exercises almost every day. One of our training days we had to practice getting on and off of a ship by climbing the nets that hang down the sides. Maybe no big deal for the guys that



John Kubal/Register

Korean War veteran Martin Bosch shows off some of his handcrafted pens, a hobby that he has pursued in retirement.

could swim, but I didn’t like it at all. I never have learned how to swim.

“Another day we had to practice unloading our maintenance truck off of a ship and onto a barge so we could then drive in onto shore. At one point I was sitting in my truck with water up to my waist and driving it through the sand to get to shore. It had to have these big long extended pipes so I could drive it through the water. Then we had to do all of it in reverse back onto the barge.

“A couple of days later our training exercise was loading and unloading our truck out

of the back of a plane (flying boxcar). We drove it into the plane and got it all tied down so it wouldn’t roll around. ... The plane took off and flew around for awhile. Once the plane landed, we took all of the tie-down stuff and drove the truck out of the back end.”

Other training exercises included: practicing maneuvers in bamboo forests; setting up camps; war games; field-testing “Weasels, tracked-wheeled vehicles that could crawl over anything.”

Then it all came to an end. It was time to deploy to Korea.

‘On the wrong end of that shell’

“As we neared the Korean shores, no one fired on us,” Bosch had told his daughter, “but we could see the fireworks off to the north. Lots of gunfire. We loaded off ship onto barges around midnight because we didn’t know if there was enemy in the area. This was around Inchon, Korea.

“We took a truck to the railroad head to catch a train for our location. ... They also issued us our winter weight

See **BOSCH**, page 15

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From expatriate to Jackrabbit soldier

■ Army ROTC prof born in Volunteer State

By JOHN KUBAL
The Brookings Register

BROOKINGS – Lt. Col. Stephen Sewell, South Dakota Army National Guard, was born Nov. 10, 1974, in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

His dad was a native of Huron and a graduate of South Dakota School of Mines and Technology. His mother attended University of Tennessee (Knoxville). His dad became a chemical engineer and got a job with Dupont in Chattanooga, where they met and married.

"I spent the first year of my life down there," Sewell said. "He didn't want me growing up in a large city; he wanted me to grow up the way he did. So he bought a General Motors dealership in Webster, and we moved up there when I was 1."

He grew up there and graduated from Webster High School in 1993. He was already a member of the South Dakota Army National Guard, having enlisted in 1992 in a "delayed entry program" and been assigned to A Company, 153rd Engineers, in Brookings as a power generator repairman.

In that program, Sewell spent some time with his unit before going to basic training following graduation. Following that he came to South Dakota State University in August 1993 to pursue his major of mass communication (radio, television and film). He graduated in May 1998, with a Bachelor of Science degree and as a newly-commissioned Army second lieutenant, he had to compete for full-time active duty.

"It was difficult then," he explained, "because that was during the Clinton administration and they were doing the downsizing of the military. It was very competitive, and I was lucky enough to get commissioned into the Regular Army (as a transportation officer)."

Following completion of the basic course for transportation officers, Sewell was assigned to the Third Infantry Division at Fort Stewart, Georgia, where he served for three years as a medium truck platoon leader and battalion adjutant. And while he was at Fort Stewart, he met his wife to be, Chris Pack from Savannah, Georgia.

"We got married down there," he said, smiling and adding, "following the tradition of Sewell men bringing southern women to South Dakota. That worked out really well."

The Sewells celebrated their 20th wedding anniversary on Oct. 7. They have a 9-year-old daughter.



John Kubal/Register

Lt Col. Stephen Sewell has found his "dream assignment" as professor of military science at South Dakota State University. He admits to a "passion for training young people to become officers."

Finding a full-time niche

After leaving active duty in May 2001, Capt. Sewell returned to South Dakota and the Guard and was assigned as senior tactical officer to the 196th Regiment RTI (Regional Training Institute), considered one of the premier RTIs throughout the Army National Guard. At the same time, for about a year and a half, he served "temporary full-time, three months here, four months there."

"That's how you get hired as a full-time Guardsman," he explained. "You have to pick up these temporary jobs, get your name out there and wait for the right time – especially for an officer, because it's extremely competitive." He was in a temporary job in Rapid City when the right time came, in August 2002.

"I ended up getting hired full-time in Sioux Falls as a brigade personnel officer, for the 147th Field Artillery Brigade," Sewell said. Additional career-enhancing assignments lay ahead: March 2006, chief of SIDPERS/PSB (an office that tracks all the electronic and paper personnel

files of the SDANG) in Rapid City; June 2007, back to the RTI as Regimental S-1 (Administration); and January 2008, a one-year wartime deployment as a member of Coyote One Embedded Training Team.

Afghanistan: an international flavor

Coyote One consisted of a total of 15 Guardsmen from South Dakota and Nebraska, senior sergeants and mid-grade senior officers (Sewell was "a brand-new major.")

"Our job was to go over and to mentor either the Afghan army or the Afghan police," Sewell explained. "We trained for three months together in Fort Riley, Kansas. One of those three months we trained in Germany for our jobs. We trained in culture, trained in combat, trained in everything we could think of that we would need to know."

"When went over, we were all split up. We knew that was going to happen. An embedded trainer works (alone), or they work in small groups."

For about a month, Sewell lived and

worked "on a German-run base in north central Afghanistan with about 2,000 to 3,000 other people." It was an international mix. He was one of the few Americans there. Other nations represented included Norway, Sweden, Croatia, Macedonia, Italy and Great Britain.

"It was a very good experience," he said. "I was U.S. liaison when I got over there. Not really what I expected; but they needed someone for a month, so I was selected for that."

He moved on to running an Afghan police basic training camp and became a trainer-mentor for an Afghan major. German police officers oversaw the instruction and basic training.

"The students were Afghans that were just volunteers off the street," Sewell explained. "We'd bring them in and try to do the best we could as far as background checks on them. We'd give them a very basic physical (exam), give them equipment and then start training them. It was part of the police surge that the Afghan government was trying to do. They wanted to have as many police officers on the street as possible."

After his return to South Dakota in 2009, Sewell went on a string of Guard assignments that included command of the OCS/WOCS (Officer Candidate School/Warrant Officer Candidate School) Company at Fort Meade. And then came SDSU Army ROTC and professor of military science – what he called his "dream assignment."

'A passion for training young officers'

"I wasn't assigned out here," Sewell, now a lieutenant colonel, said of his posting to SDSU in May 2018. "I had to compete for this position. I actually interviewed against other people for it. I was fortunate enough to get the position."

As to his affection for what he calls his "dream assignment," he explained, "I have a passion for training young officers, young people to become officers. That passion started back in 2001, when I started teaching Officer Candidate School and it just never went away."

"A lot of my career has been spent in military education. Even when I was an embedded trainer (in Afghanistan), I was considered in military education. Even though I wasn't personally teaching people to be police officers, I was running an academy."

"Here, it's pretty much the same thing. It's running an institution of military learning. And I absolutely love that."

And he also has a love for SDSU and Brookings.

Contact John Kubal at jkubal@brookingsregister.com.

Army vet helps N.C. veterans through woodworking

By AKIRA KYLES
The Fayetteville Observer

FAYETTEVILLE, N.C. (AP) – What started as a hobby between deployments for Army veteran Kurt Ballash has turned into a passion for him and other veterans in the community.

Ballash is the owner of Ballash Woodworks in Fayetteville, which specializes in commercial and residential furniture design and fabrication.

In the Army, Ballash was a combat engineer from 2003 to 2006 and then became a medic until 2013. When he got out of the military, woodworking helped him find a new purpose.

“Woodworking kind of helped me come back from a really dark place in my life after getting out of the service, feeling like I didn’t have a purpose, I didn’t fit in anywhere – I kind of didn’t know what I wanted to do for the rest of my life,” he said. “I thought I was going to be a medic and go be a physician assistant and all of those things kept getting shut down in front of me. When I was faced with that confidence boost that I was getting out of woodworking, me and my wife really started discussing how we can make a difference in the community.”

In 2018, Ballash and his late wife, Janie Smith, co-founded the Artisan Outreach, a nonprofit organization that teaches creative outlets to veterans, active-duty military and family members.

“We rebranded my woodworking business from Fayetteville Wood Art to Ballash Woodworks, we started getting going and I started to notice the increased sense of confidence that I was getting out of it,” he said. “I started teaching that and mentoring other veterans in woodworking, and I noticed that they, too, were getting some positive feedback that I got from it.”

Earlier this year, Ballash’s nonprofit received a grant from the North Carolina Arts Council. From that funding, he sent 50 military-connected families and active-duty members to his workshops to learn woodworking.

“They got to leave there with some sense of confidence in creating something that they got to build up with their hands, versus kind of seeing the destruction of what the military causes,” Ballash said. “The nature of the military is to go to war and destroy things. I understand we have (public relations) and all that kind of stuff, and we do good for the world. But at the end of the day, I felt like they needed

some sense of being rebuilt or rebuilding something themselves.”

The families made their own leather cutting boards, wallets or belts, he said.

Ballash said he wants the nonprofit to help veterans struggling with thoughts of suicide and post-traumatic stress disorder.

“I want to be proactive in the veteran crisis on suicide and PTSD,” he said. “I don’t like seeing where we’re only seen treating things at the end of it, when people are in crisis mode, when they are at their bottom. Why don’t we take a more proactive approach to it and start building up that purpose inside of them before they transition out of service to prevent them and their family from going through those hardships.”

Along with teaching skills, Ballash’s organization helps veterans build a life for themselves.

“We do have several veterans that have come to us, several active-duty members, and even individuals that aren’t military-connected, come in. We network freely with them, we go through guidance and help them develop their business plans if they need to,” he said. “Beyond just teaching skills, we’re also mentoring future entrepreneurs.”



Andrew Craft/The Fayetteville Observer via AP

Kurt Ballash poses for a portrait in Fayetteville, N.C., on Oct. 12. Ballash is an Army veteran who uses his skills in woodworking to teach other veterans and their families along with making a business for himself.

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BOSCH: Korean War vet ‘was trying to help our country’

Continued from page 12

clothing. Boarding the train, I found myself riding in a cattle car. ... The closer we got to the front line, the more fire fights we could see and the more gunfire we could hear.”

In addition to what Sherilyn Bosch had captured and recorded about her father’s role in the Korean War, Martin Bosch shared some additional memories with *The Brookings Register*.

“We were about 10 to 15 miles above the 38th parallel,” he said, citing the boundary line that separated the two Koreas. He has a picture that was taken at the 38th parallel “to show that I was there. We were in a motor pool but still within artillery range.” He was a mechanic in a motor pool and worked mostly on trucks. Bosch said he had most of his mechanic’s skills before he went in the Army. He had learned them on the farm and at an implement shop in Elkton.

On one occasion he found how close his unit was to artillery fire.

“I heard the whistle on the wrong end of that shell,” he



Martin Bosch

said, laughing a bit. “We had two jeeps hit and the truck I was going to go work on. Another 10 minutes and I would have been there. I was waiting for my Korean help to come. That truck was blew all to pieces. It did a little damage on the trucks below us, too.”

The 45th Infantry Division served with distinction in the Korean War. The division suffered 4,004 casualties: 834 killed

in action and 3,170 wounded in action. It was awarded four campaign streamers and one Presidential Unit Citation. One of the division’s soldiers, Charles George, was awarded the Medal of Honor.

‘A good thing to do’

Following his military service, Bosch returned to South Dakota and went to work for International Harvester to 1958. He then went on his own with another mechanic for awhile before “taking on the International contract, light duty. I did that for years and years and went back on my own with Sherilyn.”

The father-and-daughter team worked on trucks. He retired when he was 85.

He and his wife Barb were married in 1984. He has three grown children (two girls and one boy) and three grandchildren (two girls and one boy) from a previous marriage.

“I was trying to help our country, that’s for sure,” Bosch said, as he recalled his own military service, which took him to the Korean War for a year. “We bellyached about things;



Courtesy photo

Martin Bosch (left) and a fellow mechanic perform some maintenance on a heavyweight Army truck near the 38th parallel that separates North Korea from South Korea.

but still, when it was all done, I was glad that I did it. I think I even told a lot of kids that if you want to grow up, (military

service) is a good thing to do.”

Contact John Kubal at jkubal@brookingsregister.com.

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- Gary Sinise