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Luciano "Louis" Charles Graziano served in World War II. Staff photo by Charmain Z. Brackett

WWII: LUCIANO "LOUIS" CHARLES

By: Charmain Z. Brackett

Over the years, Luciano "Louis" Charles Graziano would write notes on scraps of paper and throw them into a box containing old photographs.

They were for his book, said Graziano, 98, who finally got around to publishing his story in 2019.

His daughter, Kim Evans, said all she and her siblings knew for many years was that both of her parents served in France during World War II, but little else. Now she and the rest of the world know of a remarkable time in his life — landing on Omaha Beach with the third wave on D-Day and fighting in the Battle of the Bulge. He may be the last living witness to the Germans' signing of the instrument of surrender at the Little Red Schoolhouse in Reims, France in May 1945.

When Pearl Harbor was bombed in 1941, Graziano was living in New York, cutting and styling hair. The son of Italian immigrants who came through Ellis Island, Graziano answered Uncle Sam's call in 1943. He headed to Fort Niagara, N.Y., where he was told to shave his mustache — "or else."

"I didn't know what 'or else' was, so I shaved it," said Graziano.

Before he left, he made a recording for his father.

"I told him everything we were going to do to Mussolini, and everything happened just like I said. He played that record every day I was gone," he said.

After training in the United States, he was sent to England via the "Queen Mary," which was an ocean liner not a military transport ship. Quarters were cramped, he said. To roll over in his bunk he had to get out and get back in. He only did that one night and after that moved to the ship's deck where he spent his nights.

He spent 18 months at England's Camp Weston.

Graziano has always been good with his hands. While in England, he oversaw 35 soldiers who built roads, Nissen huts and a theater among other things. He even cut hair while in England. When the regular barber fell ill, he was tapped for a temporary position. He asked why and was told they'd looked into his resume. His first customer was the headquarters' commander. That task earned him a commendation as utilities foreman.

His time in England was gearing up for D-Day — June 6, 1944.

His assignment was to drive

Louis Graziano is in the honor guard to the left of the flag. His wife, Bobbie, was with the women behind the honor guard. Photo from Graziano's memoir "A Patriot's Memories of World War II."

a tanker off a tank landing ship on Omaha Beach in Normandy, France.

Once he drove the truck onto the beach, he jumped out of the vehicle.

"The Germans were up shooting down on us. I took a flame thrower and got rid of the machine guns," he said.

With the machine guns out of the way, he sent up a flair for the Navy.

Some of the men had lost their weapons after jumping in the water trying to get from the LST to the beach.

"I told them to take the guns from the ones who'd died," he said.

He also was part of the Battle of the Bulge the following winter. The campaign lasted from December 1944 to January 1945 in brutal conditions.

He and a group of soldiers were called on to locate some of Gen. Patton's soldiers who'd gotten lost. Being exposed to the elements cause many soldiers to encounter frostbite and trench foot.

Graziano had trench foot with fluid oozing from blisters on his feet. He ended up in the hospital for three weeks. Many soldiers with trench foot had to have their feet amputated.

Also during his time in Reims, he was back to building and caring for them. He built a theater using the labor of German prisoners of war. It was used by USO performers including Jane Froman. His assignment was to drive a tanker off a tank landing ship on Omaha Beach in Normandy, France.

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Graziano took care of other buildings including one referred to as the "Little Red Schoolhouse."

He was in charge of setting up the room for a very important date — May 7, 1945 — the day the German high command signed the instrument of surrender in Reims.

He remembers the somber faces of the Germans that day. Although Gen. Dwight David Eisenhower was in the Little Red Schoolhouse, he wasn't in the same room with the Germans during the signing.

"He didn't want to be in the room in case the Germans wanted to back out," Graziano said.

Graziano would stay in France another 19 months until Christmas 1946.

It was during that time that he met his wife, Bobbie, who was a staff sergeant in the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps.

She stood him up for their first date, but that didn't deter him. He asked her out a second time, and she was there for the date. They married on Oct. 2, 1945 at the courthouse in Reims and honeymooned in Paris.

She was an Alabama native and didn't want to live where there was snow. His home state of New York was out of the question. He answered an ad for a hairdresser, and the couple settled in Thomson where they raised five children. He put his building skills to use in Thomson and constructed his own shop, Louis Hair Styling Salon. He still has a few customers who insist on having him do their hair.

"There wasn't anything he couldn't do," said Evans. "He's still the same way. If anyone needs anything, we just call on him."

Bobbie Graziano died on her husband's 84th birthday — Feb. 6, 2007.

While he still does the occasional hair appointment, Graziano is often called on to speak.

Bobbie and Louis Graziano met while serving in World War II. Courtesy of Louis Graziano.

He'll be speaking to a group of students at Columbia Middle School Nov. 12.

In September, the Vincent Hommeril, the French consul general, was in Thomson to present Graziano with the Order National de la Legion d'honneur. Graziano has been invited to France in May 2022 to take part in the 77th anniversary ceremonies of the German surrender.

He hasn't returned to France since the war, and Evans said they've applied for his passport so he can make the trip.

Louis Graziano is to the left of the flag in this photo of a parade in Reims, France. Photo courtesy "A Patriot's Memory of World War II."

OPER IRAQI FREEDOM: HOWARD STALLINGS

By: Tyler Strong

Howard Stallings finds the opportunity to serve his country a great privilege. So much so that after leaving the military in the early 2000s, he re-enlisted to serve once more.

Stallings grew up in Augusta as a self-proclaimed military brat. His dad served in the Army. He graduated from Aquinas High School in 1992 and went to college at Gardner-Webb University in North Carolina, earning a bachelor's degree in psychology.

Stallings said his father was "definitely involved" in his decision to join the military after college.

"The whole reason why I joined the military was my father," Stallings said. "He was an Army doc and went everywhere to do that. He had such an impact on many lives, and my life too. It drove me to want to serve, myself."

They discussed different branches and the benefits of each. The Air Force offered Stallings the best path, and the process started from there.

Stallings joined up and was soon overseas, working in England, Germany and Norway. His mission was focused on supplying communications for NATO.

However, he said that the mission changed after 9/11.

"That was a real game-changer," he said. "Our whole mission focus shifted from the end of Cold War stuff to fighting terrorism. We were helping our native partners and supporting our U.S. bases in Europe. Then, we went more global after 9/11, supplying communications to the Middle East as well."

Stallings defined supplying communications as establishing better connectivity between the U.S., Europe and the Middle East.

After his time overseas was done, Stallings was stationed in Colorado and was supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom, working in satellite imagery and telemetry.

Stallings left the service then and came back home. However, he said it wasn't long before he missed the military.

"I loved serving my country," Stallings said. "You are a part of something larger. You get a better world view of things, and what you do is essential to the country and our allies. Being a part of that is amazing."

Stallings also praised the educational aspects of the military. He said he was able to work on his master's degree while in the military and was able to gain technical experience and real life experience at the same time.

Now, Stallings is looking to get back into the federal side of things, working to get into Cyber Command or a similar unit in the Augusta area.

"It's competitive because Fort Gordon is at the cutting edge of everything, and everybody wants to be here," he said. "They're looking for the best and brightest, and the mission they do is fantastic. I want to be part of that."

Stallings expressed a deep appreciation for the military as a result of his experience.

"The military is not for everyone, but for those who are granted the opportunity to serve, I see it as a blessing more than a curse," he said. "It's not an easy life by any means. You are called to do something difficult, and it will challenge you emotionally, physically and spiritually sometimes. But it's the big picture you need to keep track of. It's for your community, your allies and your country. I challenge anybody that feels the calling to go. See the world. Be part of something bigger. Only about 1% of the American populous will ever be in the U.S. military. It's really an honor to serve a country as great as ours."

A picture of Stallings from his basic training days. Photo courtesy Howard Stallings.

Stallings also wanted to offer his perspective as a person of color in the military.

"The history of Black enlisted and Black officers that have served is that we weren't totally accepted at first. But we found acceptance in our American identity through the military," he said. "As a man of color, it was nice to represent our country in a way that was almost color-blind. It doesn't matter where you come from or what your background is because we are all there for a single mission: to protect the free world. So much of the world and the country is divided, but the military isn't like that. You're my brother and you're my sister. Freedom isn't free, and we all have to fight for it."

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WWII: OSCAR RAY BARNEY JR.

Oscar Ray Barney Jr. turns 99 June 7. He spent more than 20 years in the Air Force serving in World War II and Korea. Staff photo by Charmain Z. Brackett

By: Charmain Z. Brackett

Editor's Note: This story originally appeared on June 6, 2021 in honor of Oscar Ray Barney Jr.'s 99th birthday. We wanted to honor this World War II veteran in our selection of Veterans Day stories and have added a collage photograph of Barney's father, son and grandson who are also veterans.

Retired Lt. Col. Oscar Ray Barney Jr. wanted to help his country win a war, but his first assignment wasn't one he thought would help in that effort.

Barney entered the Army during World War II. With a musical background, he was first assigned to be part of the band, but that's not where he wanted to be.

"You can't win a war tooting a horn," said Barney who turned 99 on June 7.

He exaggerated the amount of time it had been since he'd played while hoping to get another assignment, and eventually he did. He went into the infantry first, then into the Army Air Force's Academy. At the time, what is now the Air Force was part of the Army, according to a history at army.mil. The Air Force became a separate military branch in 1947.

At the academy, he could train to become a pilot, which took three years, or he could become a navigator.

"It was a short time for a navigator," he said, opting to train as a navigator.

His training occurred at a couple of bases stateside.

They gave us brand new B17s and told us we were going to fly to England," he said.

It was nearing the end of 1944 when he boarded a plane for England via New Jersey and Labrador. Barney said they used a different aircraft after their training.

"They took the pretty one away and gave us one that was used," he said.

He flew on missions from England to Germany. They'd fly in groups of 14 to 15 and form a box, he said. Once over Germany and under fire from the enemy, they'd drop the bombs and return to England.

Barney spent May 8, 1945, also known as VE Day, in Paris. Planes flew past the Eiffel Tower and Arc De Triomphe, and he recalls seeing "people elbow to elbow."

At the end of the war, he helped transport prisoners of war back home.

When he returned stateside, Barney had a choice of staying in the Air Force.

"If you stayed in, you had the opportunity for additional training," he said.

And when the military offered to let him stay in and return to his hometown of Atlanta, he decided to stay in.

He met his wife, "a beautiful young brunette," at a supply store in East Point.

Other short stints included some time in Illinois and then to Germany, where he worked with the Berlin Airlift.

The Berlin Airlift was the response to the first crisis of the Cold War in June 1948 "when Soviet forces blockaded rail, road and water access to Allied-controlled areas of Berlin. The United States and United Kingdom responded by airlifting food and fuel to Berlin from Allied airbases in western Germany. The crisis ended on May 12, 1949, when Soviet forces lifted the blockade on land access to western Berlin," according to the Office of Historian, U.S. Department of State website, history.state.gov.

His first assignment in Germany had been as a supply officer, but the Air Force needed navigators for the airlift.

"We took loads of coal and food. Somebody started dropping candy for kids," he said.

After the Berlin Air Lift, Barney headed to Washington state. It wasn't long before the United States was involved in the Korean War, and the Air Force needed Barney in Korea.

Before heading to Korea, however, he went through a survival course in the Sierra Mountains. On the trip out of the United States, he stopped in Los Angeles, where he phoned his wife, who told him she was pregnant.

"I said 'Don't worry, I'll be back in time,'" he said.

He flew 25 missions in Korea.

"We had some planes with special equipment that made us look like a huge bomber," he said. "We were dropping flares to locate targets."

The North Koreans took notice of that, he said.

"We turned on our fancy equipment, and they turned on their fancy equipment," he said.

He spent the next several years stateside, completing assignments and getting a college degree. Toward the end of his Air Force career, he was sent with his family to Turkey with little information.

Even when he arrived in the country, he didn't know what his job would be or to whom he would report.

"I said 'Where's my commander?' and was told 'You can't talk to them,'" he said.

He would later find out that he was doing logistical support for NATO.

That assignment would be one of his last as an Air Force officer. His future options would have included the Pentagon, and he didn't want to go there.

Barney looks back on his Air Force career with a sense of accomplishment.

"I went in to defend our country. Hopefully, I did that. I didn't go to be a hero," he said.

Instead, he moved back to Georgia and settled in Atlanta. He eventually found himself working with vocational rehabilitation

Some of Retired Lt. Col. Oscar Ray Barney Jr.'s medals. Staff photo by Charmain Z. Brackett

Oscar Ray Barney Jr. turned 99 June 7. He spent more than 20 years in the Air Force. He is second row, second from right. The group is in front of a B17. Photo courtesy Oscar Barney Jr.

and that brought him to what was then Talmadge Hospital, now Augusta University Medical Center.

Barney helped people find alternative careers after they were unable to continue in the career they trained for after a disability.

He spent his last five years at Gracewood State School and Hospital doing vocational rehabilitation.

"I enjoyed all of it," he said.

Years after he retired, he'd still hear from people who thanked him for helping them find a new career path.

He continued to travel after his retirement, taking more than 100 cruises. He said he sometimes wakes from a nap at Camellia Walk and wonders what port he's in.

Barney said he's looking forward to celebrating his 100th birthday next year.

The Barney family has a multiple generations of military service beginning with Barney's father, Oscar Sr. who was a World War I veteran; his son, John who served in the Air Force during the Vietnam War, and his grandson, Wesley, retired after 20 years in the Marines. Wesley Barney served in Afghanistan and Iraq.

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POST 9/11: JEFF FOLEY

Retired Brig. Gen. Jeffrey Foley. Photo courtesy Jeffrey Foley

By: Dana Lynn Mcintyre

Retired Brig. Gen. Jeff Foley grew up in a patriotic family, the son of a man who landed on the coast of France about a week into Operation Overlord, better known as the Battle of Normandy. The family always flew an American flag, and Foley achieved the rank of Eagle Scout as a teen.

But a career in the military was not part of his game plan.

"I was thinking going to West Point and playing football and getting an engineering degree and spending a tour of duty in the United States Army," said Foley. "The Academy wasn't all that much fun for most of the time I was there. But that was it got me into West Point. And I got an engineering degree. I left the academy figured I'd do my five years, go back to Cincinnati keep my season tickets to the Cincinnati Bengals, but it didn't happen."

It changed in 1984, in Uijeongbu, Korea when Foley had what he described as a "euphoric experience."

At 28, he was a young captain with 220 soldiers assigned to him, and his commander was a couple of hours away.

"I had a combat mission. We were supporting the combined Field Army in a pretty dangerous place," he remembered.

It was there that he realized the importance of his position to the well-being of his troops. They depended on him, and he was able to watch them grow and excel.

"It was like, 'I don't think I'm going to have this experience on the other side. The grass is not greener out there, from this leadership perspective – might be more money and all that, but I was never motivated by money," he said.

By year's end, he knew he didn't want to quit.

"I said, 'This is way too much fun. And I don't want to leave it,'" he said.

During that time, he also met Beth, the woman who would become his wife and partner in the military.

"She was an Army nurse at Fort Bragg. And we started romancing back then," he said. "And together we said, 'Let's, let's keep going.' So, we ended up getting married, obviously. When I met my military spouse, I knew I had someone who understood the military, and of course, when you fall in love with someone like that, and you have a couple, it helps the cause."

After Korea, assignments led to Fort Gordon, then Fort Leavenworth, Kan., and then to Germany. In 1990, when Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait, Jeff Foley was deployed to Saudi Arabia.

"I was in the signal brigade. We were designing and orchestrating the whole communications architecture for the invasion of Iraq," he said. "And that was a fascinating experience, had great, had great bosses, great people to work for and work with."

Beth Foley stayed behind in Germany.

"I think in many cases, it was more difficult for her and the folks who stay at home. We were so focused. We knew what we were doing. And we didn't have a lot of communications back home," he said. "So, they're wondering, 'What the hell's going on over there? Are they safe? Are they in danger? Are they alive? Are they sick?' What and the unknowns are what drives the stress at home. So, I think it was much harder for Beth and so many others than it was for me."

Foley moved fom being a major in Germany, to Fort Hood, Texas, and a promotion to lieutenant colonel, to the Pentagon, the National War College in Washington, D.C., back to Fort Bragg when he was promoted to colonel, a return to Fort Gordon as Chief of Staff, then to the U.S. Central Command.

"I was promoted to brigadier general and went to U.S. Central Command as the senior communications guy on the CENTCOM staff," he said. "The U.S. Central Command is the four-star regional combatant commander responsible for Iraq and Afghanistan. And we were in the middle of the war during all of that. So, I spent a fair amount of time in Southwest Asia. And after that, went to the Pentagon and my second tour of duty."

The road finally led back to Augusta, when he was named Fort Gordon's commanding general, a post he held until his retirement in 2010.

He started Loral Mountain, a business to help people learn organizational leadership skills, harkening back to the euphoric experience in Korea, the joy of watching people grow into leadership roles.

Fort Gordon survived a Base Realignment and Closure Commission of 2004. Foley gives credit to the work done by then-Congressman Charlie Norwood, Fort Gordon Garrison Commander Col. Thom Tuckey and the CSRA Alliance for Fort Gordon, along with community support.

Then the attention turned to growing the post, bringing in new missions.

"And we change the vision and mission of the Alliance. And then the drumbeat changed. We're not trying to save for war, we're trying to attract the cyber environment of the world," said Foley. "And it was a wasn't just a drumbeat. It was a very deliberate strategy, engagement with the United States Army, the Department of Defense, congressional perspective on let's bring when the Army made the decision to create the cyber branch of the Army, that was almost a no brainer to bring it to Fort Gordon."

Foley started out to be an engineer. Instead, he became a brigadier general, a leader of men and women. It is a path he encourages others to consider.

"I think it's the military can be a wonderful experience," he said. "To learn about your nation to learn what selfless service is to learn the values of the United States Army, have loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity and personal courage and to learn how to live with others, and how to contribute to a cause greater than yourself. It's a wonderful experience."

Retired Brig. Gen. Jeffrey Foley. Photo courtesy Jeffrey Foley

Retired Brig. Gen. Jeff Foley.

Illustration is based on an image from the National Archives. Alterations by The Augusta Press staff.

THE MAKING OF A DAY FOR VETERANS

By: Hubert van Tuyll

Veterans' Day is rightly observed throughout our country. Specifically reserved for those who have served the United States, it is distinguished from the other two national days for military personnel, Memorial Day and Armed Forces Day.

We are so used to accepting the need to honor our present and former soldiers that we might not realize that it has not always been so. This nation's veterans were not treated at all well at the very outset. In this, America was little different in its attitude than many other countries –veterans, who after a certain age have little to offer, were hardly viewed as a priority.

It was not always so. In ancient Greece, for example, there was great honor in military service. The philosopher Socrates was justly proud of having refused an offered exemption and instead served as an ordinary soldier in the Athenian phalanx.

We always think of the ancient Greeks as philosophers and artists, but no Greek city would have chosen a draft dodger as its leader. (We have done it twice.) In ancient Rome, veterans returning from successful expeditions gained great public acclaim, and Rome operated hospitals and residences for veterans. In some places, veterans from elite military units, such as Turkey's Janissaries, received benefits upon retirement.

So why did this not continue into the modern age?

In the history of the West, this is not difficult to understand. After the collapse of the Roman Empire, regular armies were virtually nonexistent. Armies consisted of nobles and vassals, i.e. people who owed the lords loyalty. Those nobles, in turn, would bring their servants. Rewards – including those for past service – did exist, but there was no organized system.

As more modern organized armies began to appear, their officers often received benefits that extended beyond their actual service, but the rank and file had to content itself with its pay. Land settlements were available, but over time. these became less available (except in Ireland). This is why so many nobles became conquistadors, seeking land, fame and fortune in the Americas.

In the United States the availability of land – once liberated from the natives – was not a problem, but for the farmers who joined Washington's Continental Army, this was not always a practical alternative. A farmer in Massachusetts would have little use for a land grant in the Ohio Valley. The soldiers were promised bonuses after their service, but the new United States had no money to honor those commitments. Revolutionary War veterans were very unhappy with their treatment after the war, and the lack of promised money was the last straw. In 1785 a mob of armed veterans attacked Congress, which had to flee the then-capital of Philadelphia as it had neither the money to pay the veterans, nor the money to provide itself with security.

Two years later a Massachusetts veteran, Daniel Shays, launched a rebellion that the New England states suppressed – but with great difficulty, and it took six months. The federal government was far too weak to help. This was one of the major reasons why the Constitutional Convention of 1787-89 created a far more powerful federal government than before. (Another not unrelated reason was national security, as we could not protect ourselves.)

Veterans benefits became more popular when a large proportion of the nation's families had a veteran in their ranks. This happened three times in less than a century. In terms of participation, the greatest of these was the first, the Civil War. It gave birth to Memorial Day, but as yet there was no national day to honor U.S. veterans. However, there were many special recognitions of veterans' service across the country, much of it organized through the Grand Army of the Republic. This was the postwar organization intended for all veterans of the Union army.

The biggest step was taken during World War I. In terms of impact on America, that war does not compare to the Civil War because we were a comparatively late entrant. The war began in July of 1914; we declared war on Germany in April of 1917, and our combat presence did not become significant for another year. Yet for Americans, it was still a gigantic event. More Americans served in the American forces than at any time since, and half – some two million – would serve overseas in France and Belgium. While our losses were low compared to our allies, they still exceeded Vietnam and Korea combined (over half being from a virus, the 'Spanish' Flu).

This brings us to a very important point; being a veteran covers many things. The word veteran may refer to a lifelong professional soldier or a short timer. It covers the combat veteran and the clerk in the rear. The percentage of noncombatants in armies has increased steadily. In World War I, half of the troops never left North America, although ironically, the epidemic made their life on average just as dangerous as the soldiers in France. And all who are in army are subject to the dangers of war, not to mention the dangers of peacetime training.

This was clearly understood when World War I ended. At 11a.m. on the 11th of November 1918, the guns fell silent. That the ending of this war represented something significant, something special, and not just another diplomatic agreement was universally accepted. Hence the unfortunate term "the war to end all wars," and the establishment of a special day, soon accepted in many nations: Armistice Day. It was always to be celebrated on Nov. 11. While it celebrated the end of the war, it was from the outset seen as a time to recognize veterans. I suspect this was because so many countries had unprecedented numbers of veterans to care for.

In 1954, the U.S. Congress renamed Armistice Day to Veterans Day. So nowadays, American veterans have their own day, as well a cabinet department to look out for their welfare, a chain of hospitals, and a host of benefits including job preferences, the G.I. Bill, special university programs, and discounts at many private businesses.

May it always remain so.

VIETNAM: BOB YOUNG

Bob Young, former Augusta mayor, served in the Air Force in Vietnam. Photo courtesy Bob Young

By: Charmain Z. Brackett

Airplanes are what drew Bob Young to join the Air Force over other branches of the military.

"I've always loved to fly. It's in my DNA," said the former Augusta mayor who soon learned it was what the military wanted not what he wanted when it came to assignments.

That was in 1967 during the Vietnam War. Young had received a draft notice. He'd first talked to an Army recruiter who tried to convince him he could fly helicopters, but he decided against it, opting for the Air Force instead.

But in the Air Force, Young didn't get to follow his dream of becoming a pilot. Instead, the military branch tapped into another area that would become a huge part of his life and work. He had worked at a radio station in his hometown of Thomson prior to joining the Air Force.

He found himself in the Air Force's broadcasting track and ended up at Lowry Air Force Base in Colorado, where he worked on training films.

Bob Young during the Vietnam War. Photo courtesy Bob Young

Bob Young was assigned to the Armed Forces Vietnam Network. Photo courtesy Bob Young

"I had experience with every piece of equipment the Air Force had," he said.

In 1969, he became part of the Armed Forces Vietnam Network, which was comprised of members of different branches of the military.

"It was a unique experience being part of a joint service," he said.

AFVN was responsible for radio and television programming for service members in Vietnam.

He worked in several different locations during his time in Vietnam.

The broadcasts provided a slice of American life for service members who were a long way from home.

"We wanted to keep it as it was in the states," he said. "They were isolated from their family and friends and what was happening at home."

Bob Young was part of a special broadcast about the Apollo 11 moon landing when he served in Vietnam. Photo courtesy of Bob Young

The impact of what they did was hard to measure, he said, but they did get a lot of positive feedback.

"They would tell you how much they enjoyed it. We were the only source of that type of entertainment," he said.

Young said he'd never forget one special broadcast involving the Apollo 11 moon landing in 1969.

Working with the technology of the day, they took previously recorded NASA video and teamed it with the audio from the moon landing to provide a glimpse into space for those in Vietnam.

He remembers delivering the broadcast film and playing it in a remote location.

"I was very proud of the way the crew put it together," he said.

When the USO tours would come through, he'd often meet with the performers and do broadcasts about those as well.

Since he joined the Air Force to be near planes, he used his days off to fly with others.

Young returned stateside in 1971 and left the military after his four-year commitment.

He worked for WBBQ radio before becoming a television journalist and anchoring for WJBF-TV, the ABC affiliate. From 1988 to 1991, ABC aired a drama called "China Beach" about a medical team in Vietnam.

"They used me as a consultant. I flew to L.A.," he said.

He was interviewed about his time in the AFVN for an episode called "Souvenirs" that aired in 1990. That episode won a Peabody Award.

He served as mayor of Augusta from 1999-2005 and resigned when President George W. Bush tapped him to serve as the regional director of the U.S. Department of Housing and Regional Development in Atlanta.

He worked at Phinizy Swamp for two years.

Young said he's retired, but he stays busy.

He's authored several historical fiction novels including the "Treasure Train" and "The Hand of the Wicked" and has appeared in several movies including "Poms," "The Blind Side" and "Agent Game," recently filmed in Augusta.

He also works to help other veterans. One goal of Young's is the development of a veterans' cemetery in south Augusta. He's hopeful that project will overcome its hurdles to be a reality in the next few years.

Bob Young during the Vietnam War. Photo courtesy Bob Young

VIETNAM: IRA TINDALL

Ira Tindall is pictured here as a young airman boarding a fighter jet. Photo courtesy of Ira Tindall.

By: Skyler Andrews

Retired Air Force Col. Ira Tindall's storied military career began on a whim, in order to satisfy—or quiet down—a friend of his who had sights set on being a pilot.

"I didn't have any desire, really," said Tindall. "He kept on telling me, 'Let's go down and take the test,' and finally, I agreed to go with him."

Tindall was a son of sharecroppers in Ty Ty, Ga. who knew little else but plowing mules and farm work. He aspired to become a veterinarian. But that Sunday afternoon he and his friend hitchhiked from Tifton, Ga. to Valdosta to take the Airman Oualification Exam at Moodv Air

Tindall recalls that when he and his friend had arrived, he found that several of the 137 people who had come to take the test were highly educated. Some had master's degrees and even doctorates.

"I said, 'Buddy, we're in the wrong place,'" said Tindall, who at that point had recently graduated high school and completed a year and a quarter at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College.

Tindall completed the written portion in an hour and 15 minutes. He then took the psychomotor, or coordination test. and later qualified to train as either a pilot or a navigator. While Tindall says that gave him an ego boost, once he received the letter requesting him to report to Atlanta to be sworn in, he put the letter away.

Tindall reconsidered one day while plowing the field, working the farm for his father as he was wont to do between semesters at college, when nothing seemed to be going right. Wondering where he'd put the letter, Tindall discussed the idea with his mother.

"She said, 'You really want to?' I said, 'Yeah, I'll give it a go," said Tindall. "She said, 'Well, I saved it for you.' So I went to Atlanta and got sworn in."

That was May 1954. Tindall went on to graduate in the top 10% of his pilot training class. He eventually accepted a regular commission in 1957, after he'd realized he loved flying.

Tindall was assigned at several bases in different roles. He trained instructor pilots at Craig AFB near Selma, Ala., teaching instructor training, jet qualification and primary pilot training. He got an assignment with the F-100 fighter jet, and in the middle of all these earned a bachelor's degree in math at University of Southern Mississippi.

In January 1963, Tindall took survival training at Stead AFB (now Reno Stead Airport) in Reno, Nev., where he was top gun of his F-100 class before joining the 20th Tactical Fighter Wing and being assigned to the 79th Fighter Squadron at Royal Air Force Woodbridge in Suffolk, England. This led to his operations in the Vietnam War, stationed at Thakli and Korat, both Royal Thai Air Force bases in Thailand; and Phan Rang Air Base in Vietnam.

Tindall flew 387 combat missions while stationed at Phan Rang and Korat. He recalls missions in South and North Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, often dropping napalm or bombing fallen helicopters to prevent the enemy from getting to them. He even remembers one mission he flew as a forward air controller during which he received word of a pack train transporting supplies for the enemy from the north. His contact shot a flair, and Tindall discovered it was elephants carrying war supplies.

"We killed a lot of elephants on that trail," he said.

Tindall contrasts South Vietnam missions with those in North Vietnam, where the enemy often fired 85 mm surface-to-air missiles up to 30,000 feet.

"Now, North Vietnam was a little different," said Tindall. "Not a little, a hell of a lot different."

Air Force Lt. Col. Ira Tindall (right) next his wife Ginger. Photo courtesy of Ira Tindall.

He recalled a mission at the edge of Hanoi to bomb a railroad marshaling yard. Tindall, leading a flight of four, narrowly escaped 57 mm surface-to-air fire to release a 3,000-pound bomb on the source of the target.

Tindall recalls sometimes doing flybys, zooming by over ground troops just 100 feet above them, at 500 mph. The troops excitedly waved back, feeling safer knowing the Air Force was nearby.

"I'd rather have been in that plane instead of where they were," said Tindall. "They had to worry about it 24 hours a day. I only had to worry about it when I was flying."

Tindall would work in several other roles stateside between his tours in Vietnam and his retirement in 1980 at the age of 45. He went on to get his commercial pilot's license but decided to continue in real estate. He went on to become the owner of Re/Max Masters Real Estate and now Tindall Realty. He says that the principles he took to heart the most from the military and that he carried on to his life as a businessman are "self-control, honesty and integrity." Tindall notes that while he trusts the goodness of most people, he had to adapt to the stark difference in the prevalence of discipline and honesty among civilians and among the military.

"If you're in war together with someone, you have to trust them," said Tindall. "I had to adjust to that. There's not the integrity there that you have in the military. You can lay down your life for your buddy. I don't think you would out here."

Ira Tindall as a young Air Force Major. Photo courtesy of Ira Tindall.

A framed and signed photo of an A-7D attack aircraft, deployed when Ira Tindall was in the 356th Fighter Squadron as a lieutenant colonel. Staff photo by Skyler Q. Andrews.

Retired Air Force Col. Ira Tindall, now the owner of Tindall Realty in Evans. Staff photo by Skyler Q. Andrews.

Framed picture in the office of retired Air Force Col. Ira Tindall, honoring his time in the 79th Fighter Squadron. Staff photo by Skyler Q. Andrews.

COLD WAR: GAIL ERLITZ

Gail Erlitz spent 20 years in the military. Staff photo by Charmain Z. Brackett

By: Charmain Z. Brackett

Retired Lt. Col. Gail Erlitz had a sense of discontent in the late 1970s.

At 24, she'd been working as a registered nurse in New York City for a couple of years, but she wanted more from her job.

"I was making $14,000 a year and living in an apartment owned by the hospital," she said.

Because the hospital owned the building, her rent was subsidized. She couldn't leave her job without losing that subsidy, and she couldn't afford rent in Manhattan. Instead of staying in a position she wasn't happy with, Erlitz visited an Army recruiter.

Her commitment was three years.

"I looked at it as an adventure," said Erlitz who'd spent all her life to that point in New York. She wanted to travel.

Her two years of nursing experience put her in as a first lieutenant.

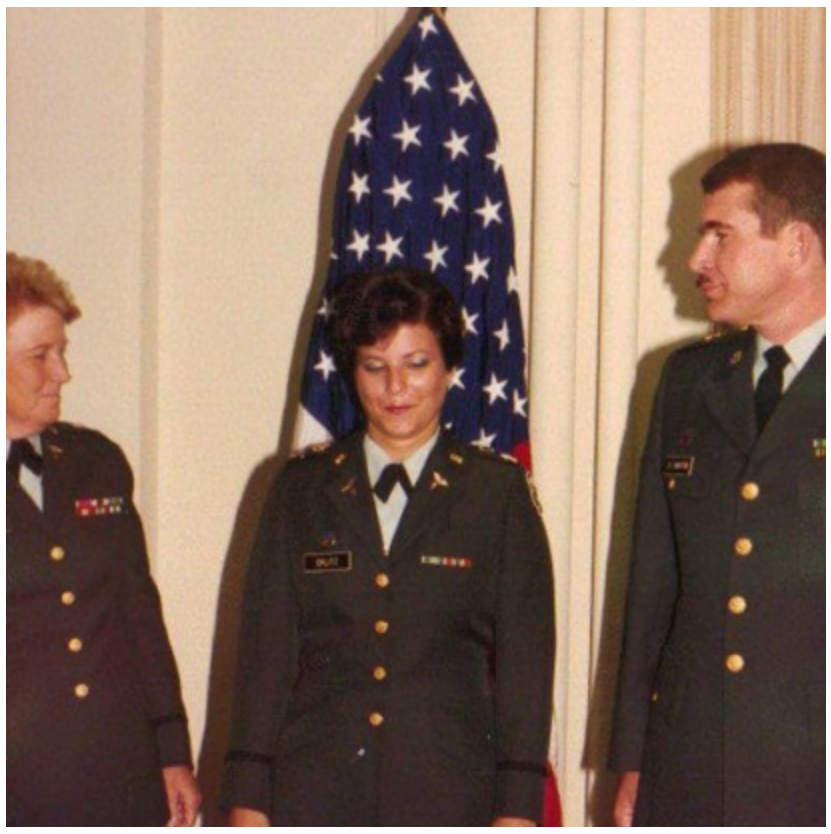
"I was Private Benjamin," said Erlitz referring to the 1980 movie starring Goldie Hawn about a young Jewish woman, who, although the least likely candidate to do so, joined the Army. "I'm Jewish and from New York."

And she probably fell into that least likely category as well. She remembers going to her officer orientation, where she was told she'd do push-ups, sit-ups and run one mile.

"I said, 'My recruiter never told me I'd have to run a mile in combat boots,'" she said. "I ran, but I did it grudgingly."

Her first assignment took her to the opposite coast — the Presidio in San Francisco, where her colleagues became like family, and she loved her job. Her next assignment took her to Fort Lee, Va., where she met her husband, David St. Martin.

By the late 80s, the couple was in Germany and expecting twin sons.



Gail Erlitz on her promotion to major in 1987. Photo courtesy Gail Erlitz.

Gail Erlitz in Germany in 1989. Courtesy Gail Erlitz

Erlitz remembers traveling through East Berlin in July 1989 and going through the various checkpoints. As a military officer, she was required to wear her Class A uniform with her rank insignia but without her name tag.

She said she got quite a few odd looks because she was wearing a maternity military uniform at the time.

She said they were told if they had any problems with the Stasi, the East German state security office, to demand to speak to the Soviets.

She recalled wondering how the people of East Germany could possibly be enemies of the United States. All she saw was the poverty they lived in.

"I saw a butcher shop with a long line in front of it, and they had nothing except oxtail," she said.

Toilet paper was another product she didn't want to get in East Germany.

"It still had splinters in it," she said and then laughed.

Less than four months after her visit, the wall came down, and not much longer after that, Desert Storm happened.

Erlitz had been in the United States at a conference when she heard Saddam Hussein had invaded Kuwait. The gravity of the situation hit her. Until that point, she'd served during a time of peace.

The family was still in Germany when the Desert Storm started. Many of the hospital personnel in Germany were sent into the Middle East with reservists backfilling positions. She and her husband were required to come up with a dependent care plan for their 8-month-old twins

"That was scary. I remember crying, thinking about dying, and my children not knowing their parents," she said.

With the short nature of the war, Erlitz and St. Martin were never deployed and didn't have to treat too many people injured in the Gulf.

Once they returned stateside, they were assigned to Fort Gordon. He retired first, followed by Erlitz in 1997.

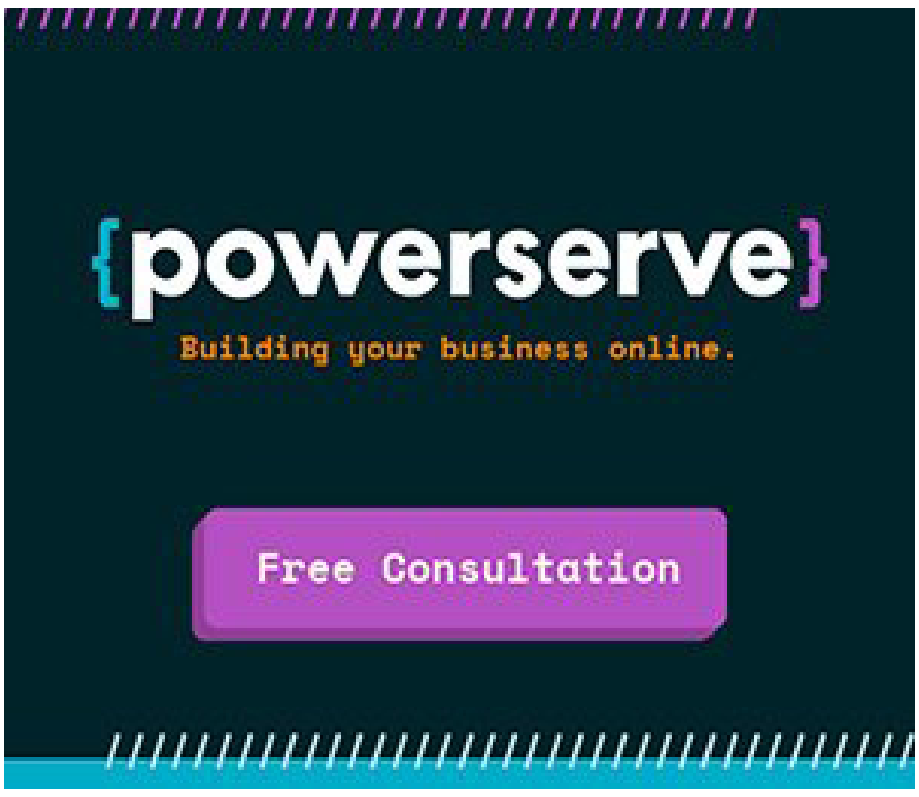
Erlitz's career as a military nurse was multi-faceted. She worked with patients, financial officers and other administrators. The Army paid for her to get her master's degree. She also oversaw a construction project and helped implement computer systems.

All those assignments in the Army gave her a beefy resume in the civilian world. Not many registered nurses in the civilian sector had the variety of opportunities she had to work in so many aspects of hospital life. She spent another 15 years working for University Hospital, where she served as clinical systems coordinator.

"I made an amazing decision at 24 to go into the Army," she said.

Now retired a second time, she still works a few days a week in a local medical office, but she protects her time to follow after that love that drove her into the military to begin with – travel. Her travels have spanned the globe, and she's happy that things are opening up again.

Gail Erlitz was stationed in Germany when the Berlin Wall came down in 1989. Photo courtesy Gail Erlitz



DESERT STORM: LISA MADDOX

Lisa Maddox graduated from the United States Military Academy at West Point. Photo courtesy Lisa Maddox

By: Charmain Z. Brackett

At Arlington National Cemetery, members of the U.S. 3rd Infantry Division guard the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

Dressed in their pristine uniforms, the soldiers take turns walking their 21 steps in front of the tomb. At regular intervals, once an hour from Oct. 1 through March 31 and every half hour from April 1 to Sept. 30, the guard is changed in a formal ceremony.

Lisa Maddox was an Aquinas High School junior in 1984 when she visited Washington, D.C. with her Girl Scout troop during spring break and watched the moving, time-honored ceremony for the first time.

It was there that her life changed forever.

"I remember thinking I wanted to do something to make sure people had the same opportunities to do and be whatever they wanted that I had," said Maddox.

The decision to go to a military academy was solidified when a student in the class ahead of hers was accepted into the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis, Md. While she first considered the Navy, she ended up receiving an appointment with the help of the late U.S. Rep. Doug Barnard (D-Ga.) to the United States Military Academy at West Point.

Maddox's aspiration was to become a doctor.

Her mother, Mattie, had few career options open to her when she was growing up. She could become a nurse or a teacher. While she wanted to be a nurse, Lisa Maddox said her mother almost fainted at the sight of blood, so teaching it was.

"For her, becoming a doctor or a lawyer meant you'd made it," she said.

Attending West Point was rigorous both academically and physically.

At a recent reunion, she said she discovered she wasn't the only one in her class who thought West Point equated leadership ability with running ability.

"I could do the push-ups and sit-ups," she said.

But it was the running she had a hard time with. She always felt like she couldn't quite catch her breath. There was a reason for that. She was diagnosed with asthma after graduating. It was also at West Point that she'd sustain a knee injury requiring surgery, the first of many she'd endure.

The first group of women graduated from West Point in 1980. The Army loves statistics,

Lisa Maddox (center) with her parents, Mattie (left) and Frank Maddox (right). Photo courtesy Lisa Maddox

Lisa Maddox graduated from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. Photo courtesy Lisa Maddox

she said, so she offered a few of them.

"I was the 813th woman to graduate, the 910th black student to graduate and the 73rd black woman to graduate," she said.

After graduating, she spent a couple of years in military intelligence. Then she headed to medical school at the University of Pittsburgh. She wanted to work in orthopedics but that wasn't a good fit at the time, she said.

Her last assignment was at the Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland. She got out of the Army in 2004. She returned into the private sector and began a career in the civilian world.

In 2010, she began a residency program and later returned home, taking a job in rehabilitation medicine at the Charlie Norwood VA Medical Center.

The job was something she could relate to her patients with. Multiple knee surgeries left Maddox with a chronic pain syndrome, and she eventually had part of her leg amputated.

While she was in the military during Operation Desert Storm and the war in Iraq and Afghanistan post the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, she was never deployed, but she wanted to be.

After all, that was what all her leadership training was for, she said.

She saw a shift in the way the military did business post 9/11.

Desert Storm, she said, had a more traditional way of fighting. A battle line was drawn with the enemy on one side and the Americans on the other. That completely changed in Iraq particularly where the battlefield was an urban setting and the enemy could be anywhere," she said.

In the early 2000s, women still weren't supposed to be in combat, she said. There was one problem with that rationale.

"Nobody told the enemy that," she said.

As a result, Lori Piestewa (who was promoted to Spc. posthumously) became the first female combat casualty. Piestewa was part of a support unit charged with bringing supplies and was killed in a convoy.

The enemy knew attacking the supply chain was an effective tactic as it would interrupt the mission of American troops, Maddox said.

"You can't fight without bullets," she said.

Now retired, Maddox is involved in wheelchair tennis and wheelchair curling. The former high school basketball player still has Paralympic aspirations.

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DESERT STORM: MIKE STRAUSS

Mike Strauss.

By: Scott Hudson

The Persian Gulf War, code named Operation Desert Storm, earned the nickname of "the video game war" because for the first time, people in America were able to watch an entire military campaign unfold in real time on their television sets.

For one North Augusta man, Desert Storm was anything but a video game. It was a real war with real bullets.

Mike Strauss was a 19-year-old, bright eyed lad when he joined the U.S. Army in 1990. A native of Deposit, N.Y., a tiny village near Binghamton (current population 1,712), Strauss was only a child when America's last major military engagement, the Vietnam War, ended.

When Strauss enlisted, the Cold War with the USSR was winding down, and he said he expected that he would be serving in relative peacetime. That would change when Saddam Hussein's Iraqi troops invaded neighboring Kuwait and threatened to overrun Saudi Arabia.

Strauss quite literally went from boot camp at Fort Gordon to arriving in a war zone in the middle of a desert in a country that he would have been hard pressed to find on a map.

"It was scary, I'm not gonna lie to you. When you start hearing the bombs drop, and you start seeing that stuff, and you know it's real, you sleep with one eye open," Strauss said.

Originally, Strauss was sent to Saudi Arabia as part of Operation Desert Shield before joining the invasion forces to liberate Kuwait. Strauss' unit was tasked with building runways and helipads in the midst of a war zone. His unit also dug graves.

"We dug a lot of graves in anticipation that there would be heavy casualties," Strauss said.

According to Strauss, battle fatigue set in quickly as the constant bombardment of shells made it impossible to sleep, and the threat of unexploded ordnance kept him in a constant state of high alert.

When Desert Storm began in January 1991, Americans at home were awed by the spectacle of tracer fire lighting up the night sky in Baghdad and watched on as Wolf Blitzer of CNN reported from the scene of what appeared to be a dazzling fireworks display.

Even President George H. W. Bush admitted he was getting just as much information from CNN as he was from his own generals. For most Americans, the Persian Gulf War was the precursor to today's prime time reality shows.

Only it was a reality show featuring real live death and destruction.

The stakes were much higher than the average American knew at the time. Iraqi Dictator Saddam Hussein made every attempt to fracture the 35-nation coalition by sending SCUD missiles exploding into Israel as part of what he called "the mother of all battles."

As was true so many other times throughout history, the relatively small skirmish between a few small nations had the potential to domino into a much larger conflict or perhaps even a world war, according to military historian Hubert van Tuyll.

Strauss says that he and his fellow servicemen knew what they were up against and were determined to do their jobs representing American might to force Iraq into submission and prevent a larger scale conflict.

"The infrastructure over there is not anything like what you see in America. What they consider a highway looks more like a backroad residential street here, and we had to travel those roads in the dark because we didn't want to give away our position and we never knew what was in front of us," Strauss said.

Speaking of highways, rumors and even news reports at the time accused the coalition forces of mowing down retreating Iraqi forces on what was called the "highway of death." Some commenters at the time called it a "turkey shoot."

Strauss says that never happened.

"I was there. I saw those oil fields on fire with my own eyes. The Iraqis were abandoning their vehicles and waving their underwear in the air. They were so cut off from their supplies that their hair was all matted down, and there was sand in their beards, they were hungry…it was pitiful," Strauss said.

After his experience in the Persian Gulf War, Strauss decided to settle in North Augusta, not far from where he was stationed at Fort Gordon instead of going back to his native New York.

"People still call me a Yankee, but that's okay," he said.

Sam Anderson with family and friends at his garrison going away luncheon.

POST 9/11: RODNEY TYSON

Lakeside High School Principal Rodney Tyson. Photo taken from the Lakeside High website.

By: Skyler Andrews

Going into the military was not an unlikely path for Rodney Tyson, having grown up near Fort Bragg, N.C.

"I was always around the military," he said. "I always saw the military as something I wanted to do."

However, Tyson, the principal of Lakeside High School, ventured a winding path through the service that ultimately led him to a career as an educator and administrator.

Tyson enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1983. After basic training at Fort McClellan in Alabama, he went on to serve as a nuclear, biological and chemical specialist. His first station was at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii. After six years as an enlisted soldier, Tyson went to Officer Candidate School and become a second lieutenant in 1990. By the time he retired in 2005 with the rank of major, he was an acquisition officer stationed at Fort Gordon, working on a new communication system.

Tyson says his wife was more astute than he was about his upcoming challenges adapting to civilian life.

"My wife told me, 'You're going to struggle a little bit when you take that uniform off,'" he said. "I said, 'No, I don't think so. I think it'll be a smooth transition.'"

After his retirement, Tyson became a Subway franchisee, operating three restaurants in the Augusta area. Most of his employees were high schoolers. One of the first things Tyson says he had to adapt to, also noted by his wife, was the questioning of authority.

"When someone tells you to do something, it's always, 'Yes, sir,'" said Tyson. "Well, I quickly found out when I got out of the military that it doesn't work like that with teenagers. It doesn't work with the civilian populace, period."

Tyson adapted to his young personnel's defiant tendencies mainly by explaining and observing. The young workers would be more likely to do something once they understood why it needed to be done. He examined them and their work habits, and over time determined that he had the skill set to be a positive influence. It was here that Tyson's next life course began to seem as likely as his first one.

"My wife had been a teacher all of our military career, so I had been all around education," said Tyson. "My dad was a teacher, as well. So it was just a natural thing for me to do to make that transition into education."

Tyson started his teaching career running the ROTC department at McCormick High School in McCormick, S.C. Two years later, he would launch the ROTC program at Grovetown High School once it opened in 2009.

Tyson's journey into education also entailed furthering his own, culminating in earning his doctorate in education from Cappella University in 2016.

Tyson says a lack of patriotism or respect for the flag among the students initially angered him once he started teaching. He recalls experiencing the bond between soldiers and their families that come of the stringent and precarious life of those in the military, and the long-lasting friendships he developed during that time. He then remembers how this already profound sense of brotherhood intensified after 9/11, and the unity among servicemembers that grew deeper since that day.

"I had to realize these kids weren't even born when 9/11 took place," said Tyson "It's part of our responsibility in the school system to teach them about that."

After eight years at Grovetown High School, Tyson went into administration, serving as the assistant principal at Evans High School in 2017. He was selected to be the principal at Lakeside and began there in 2021.

Tyson has combined insights from both eras in his life to apply them to being a school administrator. A key discipline from his days in the Army that has proven just as important in education, Tyson says, is attention to detail. He learned to observe and pay attention to details from the strong sense of routine he was trained with, and the fact that in the Army, not paying such attention could cost lives.

"I tell young people all the time, the keys to success are in the details," said Tyson.

The fruits of retired Army Maj. Tyson's journey still flourish. He recalls how, while teaching at Grovetown High, instilling a certain discipline, respect and patriotism in students in the ROTC program was often streamlined in that his students were often the children of military parents. He then observes how he rediscovers, on occasion, the impact he has made and continues to make.

"I run into these kids now at the grocery store, and they come up to me with their spouses and kids," said Tyson. " 'I didn't appreciate it when I was at Grovetown, but I'm in the military, or I'm doing this job, and I appreciate what you showed me in that routine. It has paid dividends."

Rodney Tyson enlisted in the Army in 1983. Photo courtesy of Tyson.

Retired Army Maj. Rodney Tyson served in the Army for over 20 years. Photo courtesy of Rodney Tyson.

SOMOLIA: SAM ANDERSON

Sam Anderson

By: Dana Lynn Mcintyre

As a young boy in Maryland, Sam Anderson never envisioned a military career, but a fourth-grade field trip to the U.S. Naval Academy planted the seed.

"I just thought that that was the coolest thing ever. And so, I was like, I want to go to the Naval Academy," he recalled.

When he was a little older, he realized how difficult it was to get into the Naval Academy, but a move to Virginia opened another door. To the Virginia Military Institute.

"When you get accepted to VMI, they ask you what ROTC program you want to go into. And so I said, "Well, you know, I always wanted to go to the Naval Academy. So, I'm just going to circle this little three by five card that said Navy,'" he said.

Fate had a different plan. On his first day, he was told to stand in the Army line. He followed the order.

A week later Anderson told his adviser there had been a mistake, that he had requested NROTC. He was told it was too late to change.

"I came to enjoy what it would be like to be in the Army, I decided that I would go do a tour. I had no intention to make it a career, but I got commissioned as an active-duty officer. And so ,I'll go do that for three years and go see the world. Then I'll go back and be an engineer at department transportation in Virginia. That was what I thought," said Anderson.

Once again, Fate had another plan. He discovered he enjoyed the Army. After ten years, he decided to make it a career.

His first duty station was with the 10th Mountain Division, a light infantry division, at Fort Drum, N.Y.

On Christmas Day 1992, then-First Lt. Anderson and the 10th Mountain left Fort Drum, headed to Somalia.

It was a humanitarian mission called Operation Restore Hope to make sure food got to starving people.

"These warring clans inside of Somalia were basically hoarding all the food. And so, 300,000 people in Somalia died of starvation. It was an international crisis. The United Nations went in there to try to convince the warring clans to distribute the food, and that mission failed. So, then the UN asked for the military to step in. So, the military was deployed to Somalia to basically secure the transportation and trade routes, so that the food could be distributed to the population," he said.

Anderson described Somalia as austere, with no infrastructure.

"I remember literally, we strapped wood and toilet seats to the tops of our Humvees when we when we deployed in there because, you know, we had to make our own toilets out of, you know, cut up 55-gallon drums and the toilet lids that we brought, because, I mean, literally, there was nothing there," he said.

They also set up a communications network so military vehicles could talk to each other.

"I would get on the road with three vehicles, my gun truck, my fuel truck and my wrecker. I was like, 22, 23 years old, and I had three or four kids with me that were 19 or 20. And we get out on the road, drive all over Somalia, delivering food and fuel. We didn't have air support; we didn't have fire support. Our comms were probably mediocre at best. I mean, looking back on it, in hindsight, it was pretty risky," he said. "I look back on now, fortunately, I got to see the whole country because I drove everywhere. But, towards the end of the mission, you could tell that the militia was getting more bold. They were anxiously awaiting for us to leave, they could get back to doing the bad things that they were doing."

By the spring of 1993, Operation Restore Hope accomplished its purpose, and 10th Mountain came home. The United Nations took over and more American soldiers

Sam Adams, right, and his friend Scott Spellmeyer, in 1998 after Adams' first night halo jump.

left Somalia.

In June 1993, just over 1,000 U.S. troops remained, but then 24 Pakistani soldiers were ambushed and killed. U.S. and U.N. troops searched for Mohammed Farah Aidid, the leader of one of the warring clans, believed responsible.

Operation Gothic Serpent began with Task Force Ranger sent to Mogadishu. The mission culminated in October 1993 with the Battle of Mogadishu, perhaps best know by another name – Black Hawk Down.

"I was not there as part of that. Kind of legendary mission. I obviously I know a lot of people that were because after my time in 10th Mountain Division, I actually was assigned to the Ranger Regiment, and then spent the rest of my career in the special ops," said Anderson.

He met, and in 2000, married Jana Yancey. He says he could not have been as successful in his career without her.

"You know, the commander's wife has a very unique role in the military, run the family support group, she has to kind of keep the team together, while all the military members are deployed," he said. "She has to be the strong-willed person, strong face to the of the organization, even though she's scared, worried about her husband, just like everybody else."

Ultimately, Fate stepped in again and brought him, now Col. Sam Anderson, and the family to Fort Gordon when he served as garrison commander.

"When I got elected to be a garrison commander, I didn't even know what that was. I didn't have any idea what they were responsible for. I started learning about it, and I couldn't believe that the army was giving me that much responsibility," he said. "Power, childcare, schools, ranges, infrastructure. Human resources, the press, the public face of the installation."

He discovered he enjoyed the challenge and the interactions with the Augusta-area communities. When it came time to retire, the family decided to stay in Augusta and be a part of the community they had come to love.

He is vice president of a cyber-security business and participates in the Fort Gordon Regional Management Plan, a project of the CSRA Regional Commission. He's also part of the CSRA Alliance for Fort Gordon.

He's excited by the growth that's been happening over the past decade and looking forward to more of the same in the future.

"You know, I'll be 90 years old sitting on the porch, and there'll be kids that aren't even born yet going through the cyber school in world class facilities that started being envisioned in 2013 and 2014. So, it's pretty cool," he said.

Sam Anderson as garrison commander at Fort Gordon.

Sam Anderson with family and friends at his garrison going away luncheon.

OPER IRAQI FREEDOM: GLENN KENNEDY

Glenn Kennedy

By: Dana Lynn Mcintyre

Glenn Kennedy serves the residents of Columbia County as deputy county manager, but service comes naturally to him.

Kennedy served in the U.S. Army for 26 years. His last assignment before retiring was garrison commander at Fort Gordon.

Kennedy's military career continued a family tradition dating back seven generations. His ancestors can be traced as far back as the American Revolution.

He was named for his father, Sgt. 1st Class Glenn Kennedy who served in Vietnam, including the 1965 Ia Drang Valley battle memorialized in the book "We Were Soldiers Once…and Young," and movie starring Mel Gibson. The senior Kennedy died in battle in 1966. His son was just a year-and-a-half-old.

After graduating Evans High School, he enrolled in what was then North Georgia College where he was a member of the Corps of Cadets and enlisted following graduation. His first duty station was with an armored battalion at Fort Carson, Colo.

He said one of his most meaningful assignments was as commander of the 17th Signal Battalion, starting in 2004.

"Because really, there's no greater honor than being able to lead American soldiers, particularly in a combat environment," he said. "You hear a lot about World War II is the greatest generation. I would never argue against that. But I would add that, whenever you see young Americans pick up that mantle and go to war, you're seeing the greatest of each generation. And you can be given no greater charge, no greater honor, than to be responsible for them. And probably no greater task than to be responsible for leading with the ultimate goal of making them successful in their mission and keeping them alive."

The unit spent about a year in Iraq. Its major mission was to provide communications and support combat operations just north of Baghdad.

While he was in Iraq, wife Angela and their three children were in Germany. He knows he asked a lot of them at that time and throughout his career.

"My wife did not grow up in a military family, but she took on that role of being the senior leader's wife very, very well," he said with pride. "She was heavily engaged in the family support activities of the organization. I spent 26 years in the service. I would tell you that it is my wife, my three kids who made that possible. I asked a lot of them; every service member asked a great deal of their family. And it's hard, it is a sacrifice. I remember that growing up myself. And obviously, as a child that gave the ultimate sacrifice in my father."

From Iraq came an assignment to the White House Communications Agency. They had to ensure communications support for the president and vice president was available, no matter where they were.

"Very, very intensive. Very fast paced, but a very satisfying job, too. And I got to see a lot of things that I would have never dreamed of flying on Air Force One or Marine One. And, and moving in and out of the White House as I needed to," he said. "I did that for two years under President George W. Bush, and one year under President Barack Obama."

Eventually, his road led back to Augusta and Fort Gordon. He said serving as Garrison Commander was a big job, very different from his previous assignments.

"The thing that makes it such a challenge is, it's so different from anything else you would do in the military. We all know, we know how to be operations officers, we know how to be platoon leaders, battalion commanders, and so on and so on. But it's quite a culture shock to essentially become really this the city manager for this space that you're on," he said.

What strikes him about a military career is the connections made among people who serve together. When he was stationed in Korea, he received a letter from someone who had served with his father. Then others contacted him. When he was being promoted to lieutenant colonel, the ceremony was held at Fort Benning and included Lt. Gen. Hal Moore, Joe Galloway, who co-authored the "We Were Soldiers Once . . . And Young," and Command Sgt. Major Basil Plumley, who also fought in the 1965 battle.

Ultimately, it was family that prompted his decision to retire from the military and accept the job with Columbia County.

"I really felt like at that point they had given enough. So, I just felt that it was my time to give back to them," said Kennedy. "And there was an opportunity, because Scott Johnson reached out to me to see my interest in being a deputy administrator at the time, and now, one of the two deputy managers. And it was a perfect transition. My wife and I both had family here at the time. So, it was the right place to be in and it really is a good area. The relationship with Fort Gordon and the surrounding communities you're hard pressed to find a match anywhere else. And it was the right thing to do."

The Kennedy family's tradition of military service continues. His son did a four-year tour with the U.S. Marines and both sons-in-law are enlisted.

Glenn Kennedy served in Iraq as battalion commander at Camp Victory in Tikrit, Iraq.

Glenn Kennedy with his combat patrol team at Camp Spiecher, Iraq.

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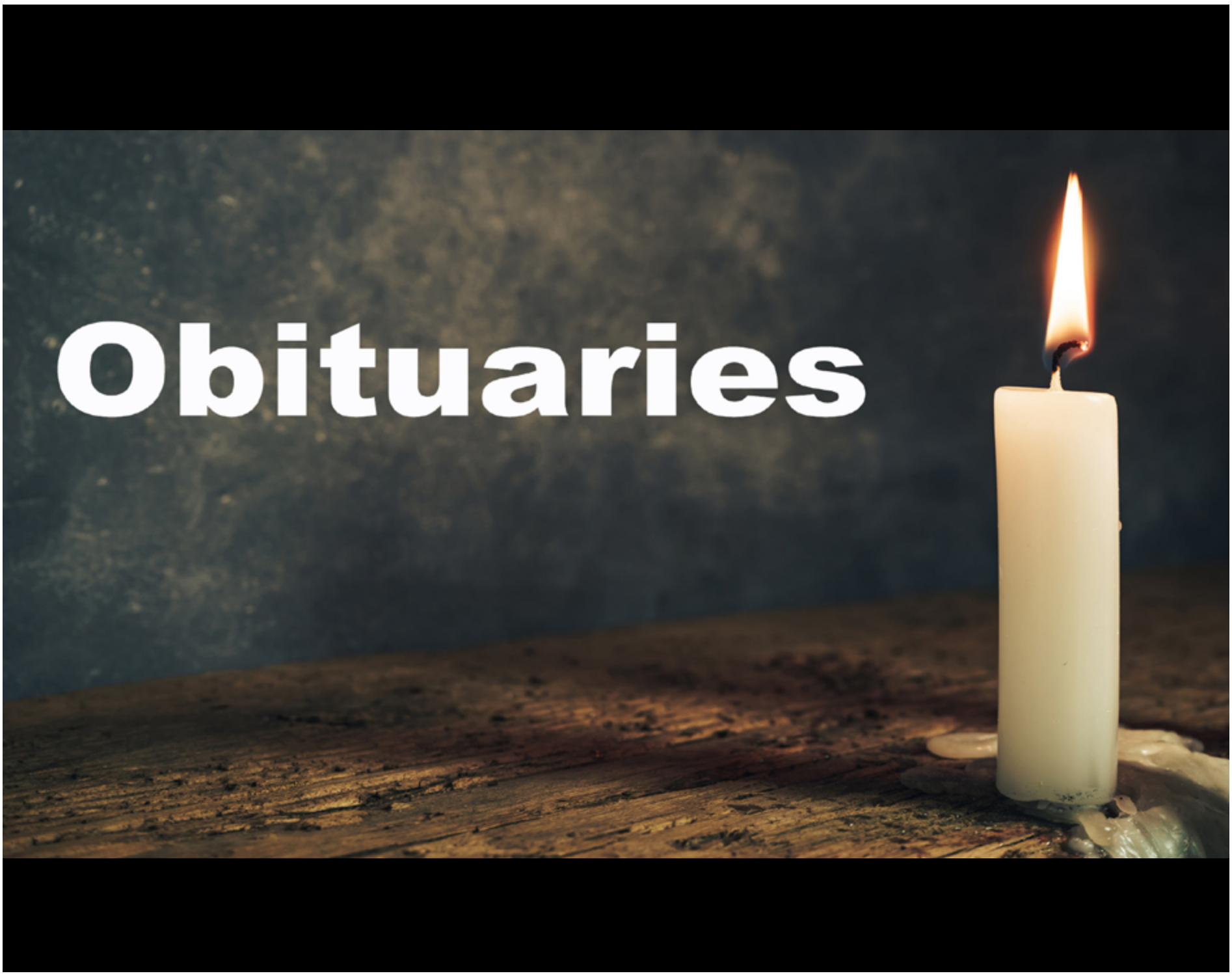
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