

ALL GAVE SOME; SOME GAVE ALL

This weeks veteran is Major Stewart.

Upon graduating from the University of Illinois in 1961, I was commissioned a Second Lieutenant in the U. S. Army Reserves. In July of 1961, my future brother-in-law, Walter Younker, and I packed our bags and headed for El Paso, TX, to attend two months of air-defense artillery school at Fort Bliss. The two things that I remember most about El Paso were sunny and hot. The newspaper carried a blurb every day about how many sunny days that they had in the last year. It seemed that every day was over hundred degrees. A sign on one of the churches read, "You think it's hot here". I have seen the sign since then, but it never had as much meaning to me as it did in El Paso. It made me want to be "good".

In September of 1961, Walter and I headed back to Illinois because we had been assigned to the 45th Brigade, Chicago-Gary Air-Defense System. The 45th consisted of several Nike Hercules ground to air missile sites around Chicago and Gary, IN, with headquarters in Arlington Heights, IL. The missiles were to protect from bomber attacks. I was assigned to a crew at Missile Master which was a big, concrete structure that housed the computers and radar screens that would assign incoming targets to different batteries to prevent wasting missiles.

I met my crew chief, Captain Stewart, later Major Stewart, for the first time. He was not an impressive man, rather short with no chin. Sondra thought he looked like a toad. He did not fit the image of a hero, but I soon found out differently.

Missile Master had to be manned 24 hours. There were two shifts, 8 AM to 4 PM and 4 PM to 8 AM. When we were on night shift, there was not much to do if you were not the officer on duty at the consoles. The hours were passed playing hearts, pinochle, euchre, Monopoly, or watching a thrilling Army film such as How To Perform an Autopsy. But the time was not wasted when we sat and talked with Major Stewart.

The Major had lied about his age to get into the Army at only 16. He became the Army's youngest Master Sergeant during WW II. While working behind the German lines, he was knifed in the back while placing plastic explosives on a tower. During D-Day, he was part of an Army Ranger group that was landed the night before the invasion. Their job was to scale the cliffs the day of the invasion and knock out some of the German shore guns. Because the invasion was delayed a day, they had to stay huddled against the cliffs for another 24 hours.

In 1948, he was asked by General James Van Fleet to join his advisory force the U. S. had in Greece enforcing the Truman Doctrine to keep the Communists from taking over. He was sitting on his helmet after a hard day of fighting when General Van Fleet asked him if he wanted to be an officer. His elegant reply was, "I have been everything else in this ##### Army, I might as well be one of those, too." Van Fleet used his own bars to give him a battlefield commission.

During the Korean War, he commanded a 155 howitzer self-propelled battery. His battery made it all the way to the Yalu River dividing China and Korea before the Chinese entered the War. His unit was trapped by the Chinese in North Korea along with thousands of other American soldiers. They engaged in hand to hand combat in order to get out.

On May 25, 1953, he was the commander of the M65 Atomic Cannon Battery that test fired an atomic shell at the Nevada Test Range. It was the only artillery piece to ever fire a nuclear shell. The shell detonated after landing seven miles away.

The Major was the recipient of two Silver Stars. He regretted that he never got the Medal of Honor. He received several Purple Hearts. We saw the knife wound in his back and white phosphorous burns on his legs. In 1961-1962, the U. S. started sending advisors to Vietnam. He was very upset that they would not let him go. By this time, his age and health were against him.

Two years after Sondra and I moved back to Assumption, the Major called us to attend a University of Illinois football game with him. He said that he was in "cloak and dagger" school. When his schooling was completed, he would be assigned to a foreign embassy.

I can't prove everything he told us is true, but I believe him. If you had been part of his team for almost two years, you would, too. You can watch the M65 being fired on YouTube. He is the Captain that appears in the film. The Major was one of those people like General Patton. They don't do well as civilians, but during war, we need them. They are **warriors**.

Thank you, Major Stewart, for what you gave for us.

Jim Bugg

ALL GAVE SOME; SOME GAVE ALL