

## Col. Robert Whitman

This is a summary of “Highlights” during my service in the United States Army. This is probably most interesting or significant in that it is not a typical career pattern.

As a youth, as soon as I was big enough I joined our local Guard unit. This was the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 105th Infantry Regiment, and 27th Division New York National Guard. At that time, units trained their own recruits. So I was trained by members of the unit who were all World War II infantry Vets and taught me from life experiences not from Field Manuals. After a number of years I found this to be some of the best training I received while in service.

I went to college in Chicago and could attend drills so I was discharged from the Guard after 2 years. I then enlisted in the Regular Army and trained as an Army Private Armor Branch. My Company Commander was a Marine. (Separate story but he trained us as Marines) During basic I was selected to attend Armor Officer Candidate School [OCS]. But you had to wait for class vacancies so they sent me to “Leadership School”. {Today this is the Non-Commissioned Officer’s Academy. Then, without promotion, I was assigned as an acting Sgt. and trained recruits for Korea. Armor OCS followed and I graduated as Armor Lt. with parallel qualification in Cavalry, Infantry and Artillery branches.

My initial assignment was with the 1st Armor Division as a Reconnaissance Platoon Leader. I strongly recommend this assignment for all young officers. A recon Platoon at that time was a small, but complete, combined arms Team. It included:

- \_ A section of Tanks ( 2 each ) = Armor
  - \_ An Armored Personnel Carrier with a squad of infantry
  - \_ Another carrier (no top) with a 4.2in Mortar (Artillery)
  - \_ At least 4 Gun Jeeps with 30 or 50 Cal MGs. (Cavalry.)
- In addition we had Radios that netted with everyone.

Note: Training goal; which we never completely achieved: Every member of the Platoon to be cross trained in every job in the platoon.

I was temporarily assigned to a "special detail "under the immediate direction of the Assistant Division Commander.

Our job: A complete inventory of all equipment in the Division. This was cross referenced with the equipment they needed under a full Table of Organization and Equipment (TO&E) status. The Division had been providing basic recruit training. It was being returned to combat readiness. This was my first experience working with a General Officer, but not my last. My next assignment was very developmental. President Truman directed the integration of all units in the Army. No more all Black (Colored Troops) units, The 9th Cavalry Regiment were one of these units. It dated back to the Indian wars

following the Civil War and had a long and numerous combat records. (7 Medal of Honor recipients}. Nick name: "Buffalo Soldiers". The procedure was that all assigned personnel were transferred out and new personnel were assigned regardless of color. I was the 14th new assignee to the 9<sup>th</sup> Cav. I became a Buffalo Soldier. The problems were just beginning. Not only was our total strength 14 Officers and men but we were on deployment (as a Regiment) orders to Korea. AND... Our tanks were old and considered unrepairable. New ones were ordered and had been shipped. We never received them. I became the S-4, responsible for all Logistic functions in the Regiment. They didn't have a current TO&E for an Armor regiment so they used the one for a Heavy Tank Battalions. Very similar but more goodies. For example: Our own Aviation Section. L-19s for reconnaissance, etc. I was cited for my logistic skills and anticipating unexpected problems. This was a pattern often repeated since my assignments were similar in nature and similar skills were required.

After Korea, my wife decided she wanted to be with her Mother and she pressured me to leave active duty. This was relatively simple since the Army was in a draw-down and Reduction-in-force operation. My year group was not subject to RIF. Upon arriving home I looked around and found a Reserve unit I could join and continue my service. It was a Supply Battalion Headquarters with an assortment of

Companies. These included Supply and Service Companies, a Direct Support Maintenance Co, Petroleum Company, Bakery Company and a water supply and Bath company. These units all had different functional missions, different training requirements and support requirements. They also supported each other

Note: I was with the unit until the Cuban Missile Crisis. During the period the Army instituted; "Command Maintenance Management Inspections" After their initial implementation, failure of one of these was basis for immediate relief of the unit commander. My Battalion was the first reserve unit in the Army to pass the new type inspection on the first inspection. In addition the Hqs and Selected units had been selected a high priority units. When the missile crisis occurred, we were well on our way to Florida for embarkation and our family and friends never knew we had gone until much later. They thought we were just local training.

On my return to active duty (New wife) I attended the "Advance Officers Course " at Fort Lee along with assignment to the Foreign Liaison Office and then Assignment as ExO and later Commanding Office of the Special Troops HQs Company at Fort Lee. (A 1,200 member Company, all the Command Group officers, Aviation Section, etc. Following this, I was assigned to Vietnam. Note; I was still a Captain in spite of being

selected for Major my records and related paperwork got lost in the shuffle. It took two years to catch up. No back pay, no adjusted date-of-rank. On leaving for Vietnam (as an individual) I and a Captain named Thompson were sent to the Pentagon. In Vietnam they misplaced American bodies (At the Da Nang Mortuary and personal property losses were the subject of a 4 to 5 foot stack of Congressional Investigations Thompson got the Da Nang Mortuary, I was assigned command of the Personal Effects Depot. This was a jerry-rigged unit composed of borrowed personnel and equipment. My total guidance from the Pentagon 3 star general was: "Whitman, get over there and straighten that s\_ \_ \_ out!" It took me six months but I did it!

Note: The TET Offensive of '68 occurred while I had the PE Depot. We were besieged and cutoff for 10 days by a major North Vietnamese Army unit. They kept us under continuous sniper and mortar attack. We lost 9 out of our 149 personnel. Several of us received commendations for such thing as going under direct fire taking wounded to med-Evac choppers. I got a commendation medal with V for valor. During this period I was under the operational control of the General at the Pentagon. In Vietnam, I had only one commander, General Westmoreland.

Rather than being assigned to an Armor unit ( There were very few of them in Vietnam ) I was assigned to another Jerry-Rigged unit. The Tay Ninh Support Command. We were given a battalion designation. Our mission would easily have taken three battalions. We provided direct support of all supply and related logistic support activities with the exception of medical; we had our own Ammo dump, petroleum tank farm, direct and general support maintenance, supply and services, bakery, laundry, transportation receiving and shipping, even a post office and sentry platoon. Additionally we had a major portion of the Post Defence responsibility. We Supported:

- Major elements of the 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division

- Major elements of the 1st Cavalry Division

- A complete ARVN Red Hat Division

- A Philippine Civic Engineer Group

- Special Forces Units and advisors with RVN Units

- All units Air Force, etc. at or vicinity Tay Ninh and

- The Hospital with everything non-medical

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The Vietnam war assignments were just short of a two year period, '67 to '69 . Of which 18 months was command time. My next assignment was to the Quartermaster School as a Logistics Instructor. Our group taught the Advanced Officer Course, Senior NCO Courses, General Officer and VIP orientations and select courses for the Logistics Management Center. We wrote Command Exercises which were used to instruct active and reserve component staffs. A number of these were adopted for the Command and General Staff program at Fort Levenworth. At this time the Army created the Military Occupational Specialty (MOS ) 90 Logistician. I was appointed the MOS in the first group named. Qualifications for this title were competency in two or more logistics fields as well as experience supporting joint and allied operations.

The next five year period included duty in the Comptroller office, training and qualification in Engineering at the Rock Island Arsenal, further qualification at the Army Logistics Management Cent and attending the Command and General Staff Course. In addition I worked in a unit that conducted advanced versions of Army raining Tests. This included exercises and evaluation of all readiness areas.

In 1977 I was transferred to the Doctrine section of the Training and Doctrine Command. There were seven of us

located in the Combat Developments Staff Section. General Donn Starry took command and one of his first actions transferred us out of CD and we became a full staff section. While still having only 7 members wrote the Division '86 Doctrine for the entire Army. As we grew in strength I was personally responsible for or directly involved in doctrine for "Low Intensity Conflict", "Rear Area Operations", "Special Forces Operations", "Civil Affairs" and all logistics developments. Our overall mission was the writing and upgrading Army Field Manual 100-5. Note: of the seven original members of the "Doctrine Section" two of us were scheduled for "The Army War College". They gave us equivalency for the course since what we were writing was what they were teaching. Also, of the original seven members, four became Generals.

My final three years were at Ft. Devens in the Army unit that interfaced with all Reserve and National Guard units in a seven state area. All of New England and New York. We evaluated, assisted, advised, and in some cases directed or coordinated actions to insure their readiness and well being.



Col Robert L (Bob) Whitman

United States Army

1948 – 1984

Medals

- 1 Legion of Merit
- 2 Bronze Star
- 3 Meritorious Service Medal (4 awards)
- 4 Army Commendation Medal ("V" for Valor, 4 awards)
- 5 Army Good Conduct Medal
- 6 National Defense Service Medal (2 awards)
- 7 Vietnam Service Medal (7 battle awards)
- 8 Army Reserve Medal
- 9 Vietnam Campaign Medal
- 10 NCO Professional Development Ribbon
- 11 Army Service Ribbon
- 12 Meritorious Unit Citation (2 awards)
- 13 Vietnam Gallantry Cross (3 awards)

Rank and Branch Insignias

- 14 & 19 Rank Insignia – Colonel (one on right & left with eagle facing forward)
- 15 Quartermaster Branch
- 16 Armor Branch
- 17 Cavalry Branch
- 18 General Staff
- 19 Note: Infantry Branch ( not shown)
- 20 9<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment ("Buffalo Soldiers")
- 21 1<sup>st</sup> US Army
- 22 1<sup>st</sup> Armor Division (Old Ironsides)
- 23 4<sup>th</sup> Transportation Command
- 24 80<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division