



Winter 2008

VOL. 22, NO. 4

## **HOLIDAY REMEMBRANCES OF FRIENDS BOARD MEMBERS**

### **Christmas in Berlin, 1963**

In December 1963, I was serving as the Heavy Mortar Platoon Leader in HHC, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 6<sup>th</sup> Infantry in the Berlin Brigade. I was a bachelor and it was a tradition in our outfit that single officers pulled battalion staff duty on Christmas eve or Christmas day so that married officers could spend the time with their families. I volunteered to be staff duty officer Christmas eve. Our reconnaissance platoon also had the mission to conduct a jeep patrol along a portion of the Berlin Wall between the American sector of West Berlin and East Berlin and the Sector-Zonal border between the American sector and East Germany. Our company commander did not want the enlisted men to have to pull that duty on Christmas day so he, the Recon Platoon Leader and I conducted the patrol.

I was relieved of my staff duty officer duties at 0730, grabbed some breakfast in the mess hall and reported for duty as the machine gunner on the jeep patrol. The CO drove, the Recon Platoon Leader acted as the vehicle commander and patrol leader and I stood behind the pedestal mounted machine gun. We wore our combat gear. Temperature in Berlin was in the low twenties so I wore my parka with liner, field pants with liner, thermal boots and a mask to cut down on the wind chill. I was still cold. The patrol took about three hours. Along the patrol route, we stopped at numerous observation posts to observe into East

Berlin and East Germany. Whenever we mounted an OP, the East German guards on the other side grabbed their binoculars and looked back!

Afterwards, I went back to my BOQ, showered and changed into Dress Blues for the Christmas day meal in the mess hall. After dinner I repaired to the Officers Club with my bachelor cohorts to critique the day. It was my second Christmas in the Army and a memorable one. *Donald Simpson*



### **A West Point Christmas**

In the dim, dark 1950's, Fourth Classmen (Freshmen Plebes) at West Point did not get to go home for Christmas as they do now. It was thought by the leadership that it built character to spend Christmas at our rock-bound highland home. Also, they probably thought if we ever got out that we wouldn't return. As I recall, the Plebes rarely got off West Point except for the annual Army/Navy football game in Philadelphia and once for the premier of "The Long Gray Line" in New York City. After the movie in New York, we received a generous 20 minutes free time to explore the wonders and delights of Times Square.

Christmas of 1954 turned out better than expected, however. No more marching to classes during the break; relatives, friends, and girl friends came to

*Cont. on pg. 3*

## President's Report

This year brought several changes in the Museum staff. In September, we bid farewell to Alan Archambault, Museum curator, as he departed for a new position at the US Army Center for Military History in Fort Myer, VA. Alan is adjusting to life in the Washington DC area which includes the daily long commute to and from work. Alan says he can live with the commute because he and Noriko will be near his family roots and they live in an area rich in American history, to Alan's delight. Len Dyer also left for a new position as the curator of the museum at Fort Knox, KY. Len is back among "tankers" and is happy. Mr. Greg Hagge has assumed the position of Acting Curator and we look forward to working with him. With Alan's departure, The Banner found itself without an editor. Thankfully, Paul Knoop has agreed to assume the editorial responsibilities, and The Banner will continue to be published. Paul, we sincerely appreciate your adding on the responsibility, given all that you already do for The Friends.

Mrs. Marion Ball, volunteer extraordinaire, decided to retire from active volunteering at the Cannon Shop, although she would be available to "fill in" when needed. For many years, Marion has been the key person behind the successful operation of the Cannon Shop. Marion, thank you for all you have done for the Museum and the Cannon Shop!

Sadly, we lost two long-time and valued members of *The Friends*. In April, SFC(R) Joseph Koczur, a member of our Board of Directors passed away from a heart condition. LTC(R) David Bassett, a former Cannon Shop volunteer, also passed away in April.

The Board of Directors welcomed three new members. Mr. Joseph Koczur Jr joined and continues the Koczur legacy started by his father. Mr. David Markham, an expert on Napoleonic history, and SGM(R) Harry Schreiber have also agreed to serve, and along with Joe Koczur have already been active in our Board business discussions and actions. We look forward to their insight and contributions.

*Cont. next column*

The volunteers at the Cannon Shop who joined us this year have been marvelous. Syndee Meacham, Janyce Parks and Pamela Bean have been dedicated, generous of their time, and the Cannon Shop is better for their service. Unfortunately, Pamela had to leave at the end of October because her family was relocating to South Carolina, but we sincerely appreciated her time at the Cannon Shop. Three other new volunteers are completing their training and will soon be joining those now serving at the Cannon Shop.

An addition was made to the routine of daily operations at the Museum. Since October, new soldier arrivals at Fort Lewis now visit the Museum as part of their orientation to the installation. Each morning and afternoon, a group of escorted newcomers arrive to see a DVD on the history of I Corps, followed by a tour of the Museum galleries. Greg Hagge has set up a room on the Museum's first floor where the DVD on I Corps is shown. Work to fully set up the room continues. *The Friends* have assisted with funds to purchase a DVD player.

As the year comes to a close, I thank you once again on behalf of the Board of Directors for the steadfast support you have continued to provide *The Friends* and the Fort Lewis Military Museum. I wish you and your loved ones all the abundant blessings of the Christmas season, and peace and joy in the coming year. **Ian Larson**



Mr. Greg Hagge, acting curator  
Fort Lewis Military Museum

## Curator's Report

It has been over two months since the farewell gathering for Mr Alan Archambault here at the museum. The event served as the quarterly meeting for our Friends group and was a complete success. Alan has since begun his new duties at the Center of Military History in Washington DC and we wish him well in this new position. On the other hand it marked the beginning of my new responsibilities as Acting Curator. This issue of the Banner is my first official opportunity to address the membership and comment on recent goings on here at the museum.

*Cont. on pg.6*

# HOLIDAY REMEMBRANCES *continued*

## A West Point Christmas, *Cont.*

see us; all of the dreaded upper classmen left and we had the place to ourselves; the Nazi-like Tactical Department even let up on us a little. Our company Tac Officer was Captain George S Patton III, the son of the famous general. He was usually a sadistic scoundrel, but his lovely wife kept him away from the cadet barracks during Christmas.

The Fourth Class (1958) assumed all the cadet leadership positions and we were no longer afraid to go out of our rooms and be subjected to the hazing of the upperclassmen. For a few brief days we did not hear the dreaded shout of “You man, HALT! Drive over here NOW” from the upperclassmen when we walked around the campus. Many of us had not really had a good look at the place until then because we were always frozen in a standing or walking rigid “brace” position as we did our daily duties.

The venerable and much loved Cadet Hostess, Mrs. Barth, and her staff organized many activities for us. For the first time we really got to know our classmates. There were tea dances, formal hops, informal parties, shows, ice skating, skiing, and she could always get cadets a suitable drag (date). Remember, this was before the ladies entered the Corps of Cadets. I remember that one date Mrs. Barth got me was an FBI agent.

We all went to church on Christmas Eve. Church attendance was mandatory then, but no one really minded. I even went twice because my date wanted to go to midnight mass and I was pleased to oblige. Christmas morning my two roommates and I sat in front of the cold fireplace in our room (the barracks dated from Custer’s time and they all had blocked up fireplaces) and opened our presents. Then we went to a very nice breakfast in the Cadet Mess Hall where we were allowed to straggle into the mess hall rather than march in formation, and where we could linger over coffee at the table after breakfast if we liked. The food was excellent in those days before the defense contractors got a hold of the Army’s food service system.

All in all, it was a memorable Christmas never to be repeated. There were many other Christmases away from home, but they lay in the Future.

My roommates are gone to “Fiddlers’ Green” now, but I remember them fondly. The euphoria of Christmas soon gave way to January, the return of the upperclassmen, the onset of winter’s Gloom Period, band box reviews in the snow, and frozen feet while walking punishment tours in Central Area. But, June and Graduation finally did come and the worst was over.

*Tom Morgan*



## Christmas, 1956, Camp Kilmer, NJ

The Army termed it ‘Operation Mercy’; officially it was known as the Hungarian Relief Program—*Isten Hozta Amerikba*, or Welcome to America.

It was the Christmas season of 1956-57 at Camp Kilmer, NJ. The first group to escape across the Hungarian border into Germany was the Freedom Fighters, followed by the professional men (doctors, lawyers, clerics) and their families. The last group was composed of those Hungarians who managed—at some great cost—to cross into Germany.

Planes arrived at almost every hour at McGuire AFB, and the welcome mat was in place. Accommodations for the refugees, State Department, and Military personnel were Army Basic; two-story WWII cantonment buildings were opened and steel cots, field tables, and folding steel chairs were the complete décor.

The duty day extended from Reveille well past Tattoo. The weather was dreary with snow, rain and sleet adding winters’ touch. As Christmas day approached the Chaplains Corps personnel and Red Cross volunteers decorated the huge tree in the freshly swept-out field house. The Christmas gifts—clothing and toys donated by the ever generous American public all but eclipsed that tree.

For those of us attending that Christmas party, the thoughts of long work hours faded as we watched Hungarian children open presents and refreshments. A 3-year old boy tasted ice cream for the first time, and his smile of absolute joy was a Christmas present for us all.

*Isabelle J Swartz*



# HOLIDAY REMEMBRANCES *CONT.*

## A Vietnam Christmas Present

When I left for my second tour in Vietnam in September, 1968, my wife Evelyn was pregnant with our third child. She knew that she was to contact the Red Cross to notify me when the baby was born. Besides the sadness of having to leave the family for a year, I felt even more depressed because it would be the first time I would not be present for the birth of our child.

We kept in touch by mail (letters and tape recordings); getting to a MARS station to make a phone call was too difficult. Evelyn was staying for the year with her mother, and with two sisters and other family members also in the area, I was confident all would be well when it was time for the birth.

Evelyn's due date was December 28<sup>th</sup>. On Christmas Eve, I received a Red Cross message notifying me that Evelyn had given birth to a girl on December 21<sup>st</sup>. Our daughter Leslie was born a week early. The message said the delivery was normal, and that mother and daughter were fine. Next to being home with my family, the Red Cross message was the best Christmas present I could have received, and made that Christmas unforgettable.

Leslie will be 40 years old this year. She has her own family and has given us two wonderful grandchildren – Ashlie, 6, and Payton, 4. *Ian Larson*



## A wonderful Christmas present 1950

The Korean War was being waged—many battle casualties were evacuated from Korea to Japan and then by air to Madigan Army Hospital. Occasionally a patient's condition required a stopover at my hospital, the 183d General located at Fort Richardson, Alaska.

In support of the war effort, Hollywood decided to preview their new movie, "Twelve O'clock High" at Fort Richardson, where the hero of the story was stationed. It was a WWII film about BG Frank Armstrong and the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Forces' bombing runs over Germany.

Accompanying the movies' stars was Secretary of the Air Force Symington and Bob Hope's theatrical group. A week before Christmas, word spread around the Hospital that a show was scheduled, and we were to bring as

*Cont. next column*

many patients as possible to the Red Cross Hall. Ambulatory, wheel chaired, and litter-borne patients filled the hall; medical personnel lined the walls. The lights were dimmed, the curtain opened and there stood our Christmas present—Bob Hope and his troops. For 30 minutes he joked with the soldiers, his young starlets danced and flirted, and others kept us enthralled the full time.

As Bob said farewell and, like St Nicholas, off he flew to his next stop—the troops in Korea—he left us with our memories, a wonderful Christmas present.

*Marion Ball*



## Christmas in Giessen, 1959

One of my more memorable holidays in the Army was my first; Christmas, 1959, in Germany, on my initial assignment to a 280mm Gun Battalion after the Field Artillery Officers Basic Course. As a 'geographic bachelor', in Giessen, Germany, I (and the real bachelors in the battalion) was invited to Battalion Commanders' home on Christmas Eve. Since several of us had not yet had the customary formal call on our Commanding Officer, we were attired in the traditional "Dress Blues, Tennis Shoes, Collar Stays and a light coat of oil".

After the formalities of meeting the Commander's wife, exchanging pleasantries, a tour of their quarters, and several drinks, dinner was served. Following dinner, wine and more drinks, we were advised that it was time to decorate the tree! What an experience; and what a tree, after 6 half-potted junior officers finished stumbling over each other and around the Bn Cdr and his wife, in a small living room in government quarters.

It was an evening to be remembered, as was the following day's meal in the mess hall, without my family waiting to join me, but with the soldiers and their families, in our slightly shop-worn Dress Blues. Oh, to be young again!! *Paul Knoop*

*Remembrances Cont. on Pg. 5*



# HOLIDAY REMEMBRANCES *CONT.*

## CHRISTMAS 1963 –Asmara, Eritrea, Ethiopia

This was our first overseas tour and first time away from family and close friends. We left Fort Ord, CA, for Asmara, Ethiopia (now Eritrea) in November of 1963 a few days after President Kennedy was assassinated. We departed Monterey on a 2 engine plane for San Francisco; it was the wife's (Billie's) first flight and she could see the flames coming from the engine on her side of the plane. She was sure we were going to crash before we got to San Francisco. Well, we made it to San Francisco, New York, London, Paris, Rome and finally Athens with no problems. A 6 hour layover with an 18 month old daughter in Athens was a challenge. We toured a very small part of Athens. No Coliseum. At Athens we transferred to Ethiopian Airlines with a stop in Cairo. Asmara, Eritrea is at an elevation of 7,874 ft above sea level. Upon approaching the airport in Asmara, Billie looked out the window of the plane and saw several stick shacks and informed me she was not living in one of those and wanted to go home to California right then. We landed and were met by our sponsors, who drove us to Kagnev Station and the Kagnev Guest House where we would reside until we found permanent quarters.

Christmas was close, so we went to the PX for some Christmas toys for our daughter, Sabrina. This was our first awareness that things arrived several months ahead of our seasonal events. So we went down town to Asmara to a place called Jessie Dobbins, a retired Army Sergeant who had married a local Italian lady and stayed in Asmara. This store had most everything you could imagine. There we purchased several small plastic toys made in Italy. Sabrina would still have a Christmas. The Christmas tree in the guest house would have rivaled Charlie Brown's Christmas tree--not much more than a stick with a few limbs. Again, it had arrived well before the Christmas season. For the Officers, the Christmas Party would of course be at the Officers' Club. This was also a Hail and Farewell Event affair, and of course, we were hailed as new arrivals. It was quite a party. The Post Commander was from the South and his wife was from Georgia. She was referred to as Peaches. *Cont. next column*

The opening song for any event at the club we soon learned would be Dixie and everyone would stand at attention during the singing/yelling of the song. If you want to learn more about Kagnev station or "Island in the Clouds" you can go to [Kagnevstation.com](http://Kagnevstation.com).

*Pat Powers*



## Christmas, 1967

Our Memorable Christmas 1967 began December 12, 1966. MILPERCEN called me at grad school in Boston and told me I was to be in Saigon on January 7, 1967. I was urgently needed there. I closed our New England home, shipped our household goods to San Antonio where Nancy's folks had found a rental house for the family near Fort Sam Houston. I drove the family to San Antonio. A friend at Fort Sam received our furniture and stacked all the boxes in the rented house. I hurriedly settled the family and rushed to the sound of cannon.

When I got to Vietnam I had a six month overlap with the fellow I was to urgently replace. It was years before I told Nancy I had needlessly pulled her and our children through a knot hole.

1967 in RVN proceeded slowly. Finally December arrived. Rocket attacks increased. I didn't know it, but the Viet Cong and NVA were rehearsing for Tet '68. Long story short. I got a drop and made it home, not for Christmas, December 25, 1967, but Christmas, December 27, 1967. It was great. *Carroll Dickson*



Decorating the Tree, c. 1944

*Curator's report, cont.*

I have to admit to being a low profile person and many of you may not have seen me around much. In a nut shell I have been the collections manager for the past twenty one years; Alan hired me three months after his own arrival. Since that time a great many changes and improvements have been implemented in the galleries. Many new objects have entered the collections. The support and assistance of the Friends has been a critically important factor in every one of these evolutions. In the past two months changing requirements and interests from the command group have placed emphasis on the Lewis and Clark Expedition and the recent and future history of I Corps. This translates to expansion and rearrangements in these areas of the galleries. In line with these projects some updating of the display areas is also part of the plan. Again the active support of the Friends is a necessary factor for success. To support a grounding for new soldiers arriving on post, we have constructed a theater in the rear of the Family Gallery. The Friends have purchased a DVD player and will do more in the future to provide a place to show a video produced on post for the new soldiers. These Replacement Company tours are happening twice a day every week. This is a major project and we have received very good commentary from the soldiers on our program.

Another project has not fared as well. Some of you may know about the extensive \$ 6 million renovation planned for the museum building. This would have been a major building and maintenance project. The bids were in and it was "going to happen", but at the last minute before the fiscal year ended the project was canceled by a technicality. The plan is now to do some reevaluating and start the process over again. We will have to wait and see what the future will bring.

The closing days of 2008 are upon us with Christmas just around the corner, so I wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year and hope to see you at the next Friends Brunch.

Respectfully, Greg Hagge

**A brief note from Alan Archambault,  
recently departed Museum Curator**

I thought I would use this opportunity to let everyone know that I am gainfully employed at the Center of Military History and all is well. I am still getting settled in both on the job and at home. We recently closed and moved into a house in Knoxville/Brunswick, Maryland. I love the area as it is in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains 10 miles from Harper's Ferry and close to Antietam, Gettysburg, and other historic sites. In fact, I am going to a commemoration of the Gettysburg Address later today in Gettysburg.

I take the train daily to Washington, DC which is a two hours + operation each way. However, I do not really mind it and I feel it is the price I must pay to live where I do. Once my two year obligation is completed I may look to work as a freelancer. With the National Archives and other resources here, I will try to make the most of them. Please feel free to contact me at my email as follows:

[alan.archambault@us.army.mil](mailto:alan.archambault@us.army.mil).

I hope all of you had a great Thanksgiving and hope that the coming holiday season is a joyous one for you and yours.

Warmest Regards,  
Alan

**The Friends of the Fort Lewis Military Museum  
Board of Directors**

- COL (Ret) Ian Larson.....President
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The *Banner* is printed four times a year and is mailed to all members of The Friends of Fort Lewis Museum. Articles may be submitted to the Editor or left with the Curator of the Fort Lewis Museum. The Friends assume no responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts or other materials submitted for publication.

Editor.....Paul Knoop  
Assistant Editor.....Don Simpson

**FRIENDS OF THE FORT LEWIS MILITARY MUSEUM  
GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING  
SUNDAY, JANUARY 25, 2009**

Place: Patriots Landing  
Time: 1145-1230 Social Hour  
1230-1330 Brunch  
1330-1412 Program

Program: The Friends are honored to have COL (Ret) Gary Smith, who is an Intelligence Analyst as our speaker. He will brief us on the South Sound Regional Intelligence Group, including intelligence to counter subversive organizations and their activities, as well as various criminal groups and their threat to National Security.



Please return your reservation form and check by Friday, 23 January 2009. Last minute reservations may be made by calling Paul Knoop at (253) 279-2598

Return this form to LTC (Ret) Donald A Simpson, 6615 79th Street W  
Lakewood WA 98499. Make checks payable to "The Friends".  
Cost of Brunch for members and Guests: \$16.00 each.

Number of Reservations: \_\_\_\_\_ Total Amount Enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Member: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Names of Guests: \_\_\_\_\_

**Residents of Patriot's Landing do not need to make payment for the meal, but should make reservations for seating.**

**Please note that if you are not a Life or Honorary member, your 2009 Dues are now due, and payment maybe included with your Brunch payment.**

## CHRISTMAS AT THE CANNON SHOP

Do you want to get great gift items for veterans, active duty personnel, or anyone with an interest in our military heritage and at the same time support the Fort Lewis Military Museum? Then check out the merchandise at the Cannon Shop! All profits generated by the Cannon Shop go to supporting the Fort Lewis Military Museum and its programs. Since the gift store is operated by volunteers, the prices of items sold in the store are kept low and are affordable to all our visitors.

The Museum gift store carries many popular items including commemorative coins, pins and insignia, shot glasses, coffee mugs, T-shirts, and of course, model cannons in various sizes. The cannons look great on a desk, mantle, or bookcase. The Cannon Shop also carries a variety of Stryker memorabilia including handcrafted wooden models of the different Stryker variants, small die-cast models, coins, pins, caps, and other items. For the kids, the Cannon Shop has military action figures, die-cast tank models, pull-back tanks and Humvees, die-cast pencil sharpeners of various military aircraft and vehicles, T-shirts, military-related coloring books, and other items of interest.

For those interested in military history related books, posters and prints, the Cannon Shop carries a variety to choose from that will please family members and friends on your gift list.

You can also shop on-line for many items offered at the Cannon Shop, particularly Stryker memorabilia, T-shirts, some coffee mugs and commemorative coins. Go to [www.fortlewismuseum.com](http://www.fortlewismuseum.com).

If you have any questions, you can reach the Cannon Shop at 253-967-4523.

Cannon Shop Hours: Wednesday-Sunday, 12-4 PM

**Help Us Defend Our  
Military Heritage—  
Please continue to be a  
Friend of the Fort Lewis  
Military Museum**

**If you are not a life member, 2009 Dues are  
now payable.**

*Friends of the Fort Lewis  
Military Museum  
PO Box 331001  
Fort Lewis, WA 98433-1001*

