

ON THE RIGHT TRACK

1ST Battalion 50th Association



December 2024

Page | 1

Greetings:



Hope everyone is having a great year and looking forward to the holiday season. Things have slowed down a bit for this fall and there have been only 3 graduations at Ft. Moore, including one coming in December.

This year I'm looking forward to getting to go again to Wreaths Across America in Washington, DC. This will be on December 14th at Arlington National Cemetery. It's a great event and I look forward to attending to honor our veterans there. If you have not had a chance to participate in this event, I encourage you to consider it sometime, or one of the local ones in your area.

Everyone put on your calendar the next reunion. Planning is now underway. The dates for the Reunion will be May 6th-9th, 2025. We hope you can make plans to attend now.

I want to wish everyone a Happy Thanksgiving and a Merry Christmas.

Jimmy



Editor: Lorene Burch

From the Hatch	Page 1
Chaplin's Corner	Page 2
Editors' note	Page 2
Gone but Not Forgotten	Page 3
Induction – The Beginning	Page 4-8
Reunion information	Page 8
Reunion Form	Page 9

ON THE RIGHT TRACK

1ST Battalion 50th Association

December 2024

Page | 2



Chaplains Corner



I hope everyone is healthy and well. At the time of this post fall is over and it was a beautiful time of the year. The weather cooperated and it was a very dry month of October. All the rice, corn, cotton, soybeans, and peanuts have been harvested; we have a lot to be thankful for.

My studies this week have been in the Old Testament, very interesting and timely. I studied of Joseph and his brothers and family reconciliation. By the timely I mean just after the election it shows the reward of coming together and living as a family in a great nation. We as Americans can lead the world and be a good example for all the nations on how to live in peace. Take the time to read Genesis 42-45 it shows the rewards of reconciliation and at this time in history we need to have reconciliation.

So let us forget about political parties and live in peace with one another.

May God bless you and your family and Bless the United States of America.

Toby

Greetings:

Another year has passed and we are headed into a new beginning.

I have been working on organizing my office a little better. As I am sure most of you are aware that every time you are trying to be careful you lose something in the process. I lost an article I had on my desk and just can't find it. I looked in all the logical places but still cannot find the thing. Will probably find it, when I no longer need it.

Roger is recuperating from shoulder surgery. So, are staying fairly close to home while he mends.

We are looking forward to the reunion in May of 2025. I noticed they are having the auction and several other things going on. Be sure to read the information and the form closely.

It has been a pleasure to start hearing from more of you from time to time. I am pleased to be able to post the articles sent in by different members. It isn't that hard to put the news letter together when I have more information. I may have to get creative on how I get things fit in, but it is something I truly enjoy. Once again thank you for allowing me to serve such a great group of people.

Blessings,

Lorene Burch

522 Aullwood Rd.

Salina, Kansas 67401

thelmaburch@gmail.com



ON THE RIGHT TRACK

1ST Battalion 50th Association

December 2024

Page | 3



Gone but not Forgotten may he rest in Peace

EHRLICH, Paul William of Norwood, MA, passed away, on October 12, 2023, at the age of 76. Devoted father of Jason P. Ehrlich and his wife, Michaela of Douglas, MA, James M. Ehrlich and his husband, Corey French of Amherst, NH. Loving Brother of Richard Ehrlich and his wife, Cindy of Vernon, CT, Robert Ehrlich And his wife, Tara of Land O' Lakes, FL. And Karen Ehrlich DeMeo and her Husband, Brian of Norwood, MA. Cherished uncle of Kristen (Ehrlich) Gomez and her husband, Matt of Marlborough , Ct, Brian Ehrlich and his wife Corey of Westbrook, CT, Kevin Ehrlich and his wife, Gianna of Wethersfield, CT, Jennifer (Ehrlich) O'Connell and her husband, Matt of Paradise valley, AZ, Kelly (Ehrlich Tracey and her husband, Bill of Raymore, MO, Tara Cuturic and her husband, Mario of Willoughby, OH, Brian DeMeo and his wife, Brittany Jaye of Norwood, MA and Christopher5 DeMeo of Quincy, MA. Dear son of the late Richard M. Ehrlich and Mary T. (Dwyer) Ehrlich of Norwood, MA. He went to Norwood High School for two years, but ultimately, graduated from West Genesee High School in Camillus, NY in 1965. After high school, he enlisted I the United states Army. He attended Officer Candidate School in Fort Benning, GA. He was initially stationed in Germany before he was deployed to Vietnam and was promoted to first lieutenant. He was well decorated for his heroic actions and bravery with a silver star, four bronze stars and three purple hearts. He attended University of Massachusetts, Boston and earned a bachelor's degree in mathematics in 1973. He went on to earn a master's degree in computer science from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in 1977. He spent time in Tolland, CT and Reston, VA. Before ultimately moving back to Norwood. He spent years working in Boston MA as a branch manager for Satellite Business Systems. He Co-founded B&E Associates, acquiring sites for cell phone tower construction, which was eventually sold to American Tower. He was a dedicated life-member of the North Walpole Fish and Game Club for many years, as well as a devoted member of St. Timothy's Parish in Norwood. He cherished the time he spent at his camp on Sebec Lake in Main with his family and friends. He was enthusiastic fan of all Boston sports teams. He was a New England Patriot season ticket holder, where he enjoyed attending games with his brother, Richard, Son and nephew, Brian.

(Served with Alpha Company from 5/3/68-5/3/69)

Contacted by James Ehrlich, through email.



ON THE RIGHT TRACK

1ST Battalion 50th Association



December 2024

Page | 4

INDUCTION – The Beginning

Submitted by Jim Sheppard

***"I, James Sheppard, do solemnly swear that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; and that I will obey the orders of the President of the United States and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according to regulations and the Uniform Code of Military Justice.
So help me God."***

It was done. The month leading up to this day began with the arrival of that infamous letter which began with "Greeting, From the President of the United States". I still have that notice from my local draft board!

I was to serve for three years since I enlisted after receiving my Presidential Draft "Invitation". The Draft called for an enlistment of 2 years, but the "rub" was that Uncle Sam could assign you to whatever Godforsaken duty he pleased if you simply entered for your 2 year obligation. The military took advantage of this by allowing draftees to seek out an enlistment of their choice in any available U.S. Armed Forces entity....but an enlistment was for a minimum of three years as opposed to the draft's two years. The advantage to enlisting was that one could enlist to a guaranteed Military Occupational Specialty. This "MOS" or "job" in civilian terms, would be a way to avoid an enlistment in a direct "Combat Arms" unit...Infantry, Armor, Artillery...come to mind, but Infantry was the fear of most.

You must remember that a volunteer military had severely diminished in popularity with the onset of the Vietnam War years. I fondly recalled the past national pride of the 1950's. Both of my older male siblings had joined the Air force and Army respectively. The later, my oldest brother, being an Officer in the Army Quartermaster Corps, and ever after lamenting that he could not qualify for Combat Engineers since he wore glasses! (Ten years later it would have mattered little!) Those were times when a military uniform always drew respect. Contrary to what may be written these days, in the mid sixties, it was still an "easy ride" to hitchhike while wearing your Class A "Dress" Uniform. Antiwar sentiments did not truly flourish until the early 70's.

And so, I was off to "recruiter's row" in Camden, New Jersey.

I believe it was the second floor of a Federal Style Building in a city which was fast becoming a horrible slum....on the rat infested banks of the Delaware river, opposite Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. This building was where one completed preliminary medical testing...and once you were deemed healthy enough for military service, and that last hope of reprieve removed...you might, as I did, opt for the world of the Recruiting Sergeant! All of the Armed Services were represented in a winding hallway area of this same building. You quickly learned the sad news...all the "cushy" services had no "slots" open for new enlistments. The Air Force, Navy, Coast Guard and Reserves were out. This left the Marine Corps and the Army. And so, with the ultimate course of action being to avoid combat, which ruled out the Marines, I entered the Army Recruiters Office. "Clerk?.. You bet Sheppard! We can do that for you!" the Sergeant responded with a smile that somehow hinted more at amusement than pleasure...although it was hard to tell the difference.

ON THE RIGHT TRACK

1ST Battalion 50th Association



December 2024

Page | 5

I had a scant 2 weeks until I was to report for induction in Newark, New Jersey...a city which was in as similar a decline as Camden, but in the northern part of New Jersey.

Mom dropped me off at the subway in Camden on the morning of November 30th, 1965. I had been given a collection of subway tokens and cash...just enough to get me to Newark...and instructions on how to do so. Mom Cried.

Induction Station, Newark, New Jersey

What seemed like a much larger group, but was actually about a hundred men, assembled in a hall more suitable to a gathering half this size, and suddenly, the directions were taking on a more course nature...not quite the “Drill Sergeant” sharpness...but we were moving in that direction for the first time.

We were given tests, mostly written, of every conceivable nature. We were not aware of how important these tests were to our future military life, but one of these, the “GT” score would prove my savior on many occasions. The Military “GT” score is their own equivalent to “IQ”... your Intelligence Quotient (level)...and most MOS’s are GT score qualified. My GT score was very high, and I was singled out on more than one occasion for this fact. There was a break for lunch. We were given just enough for a small greasy spoon café across the street. It was terrible food...and in a very gloomy “inner city” setting...A bit of a shock for a young man from the very well-to-do suburb of Haddonfield, New Jersey! The diners were all young men in my same circumstances...although I was to learn that most of these men had elected to serve 2 years only and subject themselves to the whim of our military for their job assignments for the next two years.

My Service Number: RA12749452

I will remember this number until I die...and suspect they will issue my new dog tags in heaven with that same identification. I believe it was somewhere during this day that the first distinction became apparent that there was to be no love lost between the Enlistee and the Draftee!

Before Social Security Numbers took on the dual role of also being one’s Military Service Number, all Service Numbers had prefixes. Non-commissioned Enlisted Men’s Service Numbers began with the prefix “RA” (I always assumed this stood for “Regular Army”) and Draftees had a prefix of “US”. A badge they wore with pride....and a distain was born that day for all with the prefix of “RA”. It mattered little that most men with the tag were there as a result of logic similar to my own ...that it was better to have some small control over my own destiny by enlistment and service for an extra year...and were really draftees of a sort regardless! It mattered little....I was labeled “RA”, a “lifer”, or career military man and the phrase was always delivered with contempt, mild or severe.

Most of the afternoon that day was spent waiting...a prelude to army life. We took the oath sometime after dark and were promptly loaded onto several buses waiting to take us south to the Fort Dix “Induction Station” in Central New Jersey, about an hour’s drive. You might have thought these men had been in prison for months by the way they reacted to any female unfortunate enough to be within earshot or line of sight as we left Newark! It was fun. The first laugh we had experienced in a long... and, for the most part, somber day.

The Reception Station at Fort Dix was in a section of the base still dominated by the older World War II style wooden Barracks. We had been given very specific instructions about what we could bring with us for induction into the military. As I recall, only the clothes we were wearing and a few essential toiletries were permitted. Fortunately, after a very brief assignment of barracks in the cold night in near darkness, we were off to a huge wood building to be issued uniforms!

Cattle!

ON THE RIGHT TRACK

1ST Battalion 50th Association



December 2024

Page | 6

The phrase “herded like cattle made human sense in this setting! We were first issued a small carry bag ironically called an AWOL bag! Since this was an acronym for “Absent Without Official Leave” we were already being prepared to desert!

We were ordered to strip off all that we wore and place these items into the AWOL Bag and proceed. Next we received a large “Duffle” bag into which most of the rest of our military clothing issue would be placed. Thankfully, underwear was next! We were all shivering...mostly from the cold, but I must admit there was an element of fear and loneliness in this crowded setting also.

The process by which clothing was issued was completely one-sided....with the military personnel who issued clothing having complete control. Items were simply handed to us without query as to size, etc! As it turns out, although these items of clothing were too large for some...and too small for others, in the weeks to come, these assigned garments miraculously became perfect fitting...as training removed or added pounds. These men were able to glance at an inductee and determine not only his current size....but anticipate where he would morph to in the ensuing training months! Nevertheless, this was unknown to us and we all perceived this as military insanity!

Boxer shorts!

All my life I had worn briefs....snug and safe. Now I stood...oddly thankful I might add...in Army Issue, Boxer Shorts! The socks and t-shirts were deposited by command into the duffle bags. God help the man who put on a t-shirt as he was promptly reprimanded and told to remove the garment and wear nothing unless told to do so. Next were Combat Boots. I swear. We were handed two pair of boots and told to move on. They fit! One pair went in the bag...the other went on our feet...as well as a pair of socks! What a sight we must have been. All standing in line in white Boxer Shorts and Olive Drab socks and combat boots...unlaced! We proceeded on...receiving army fatigues...shirts and pants, dress uniforms...Class “A” Green and Khaki, hats, gloves, jackets and coats....Dress Shoes, belts, brass insignia...everything we would wear in the coming months....our “Regular Issue” as I would come to learn.

These reception Station Areas were never intended for housing men “long term”. Men, under normal circumstances were “in and out” of these processing “factories” within two days. But times were different in late 1965. The United States involvement and commitment in South Vietnam was escalating. At about this time, the inductees and volunteers were entering the service in numbers that caused a taxation of all normal function for these beginning stages as well as Basic Training. Normal Infantry units were pressed into serving as Basic Training Units all over the country. The buildup surpassed the Korean War effort and was rivaling World War II levels at times. This all translated into a backlog and pileup at the reception station level. Troops were coming faster than new Training Units were able to accommodate. Hence, what should have been 2 days processing in New Jersey turned into nearly three weeks...twenty days to be exact! We ended the night with a rudimentary blood test to establish our blood type. We were each stuck in a finger of our gracious host’s choice for a small blood sample! Not to worry...a Band-Aid was promptly issued. I remember falling asleep in those old drafty barracks feeling miserable. It was quiet that first night as the realization of our unavoidable service life lay before us firm and real.

Day two brought us back to that same clothing issue building. Today however the first order of business was getting shots! We were ordered to strip to the waist and stand in a slow moving line to receive a double blast of shots....from something I had never before seen! They used air injection guns that literally shot a dose of prescribed medicine into your arm!...albeit merely subcutaneous. it was a large and imposing looking

ON THE RIGHT TRACK

1ST Battalion 50th Association



December 2024

Page | 7

contraption...resembling some sort of science fiction “ray gun” with it’s air hose trailing off to an air compressor. Military personnel in white Doctors lab coats stood on either side of a man when he reached the front of the line and each man was blasted by two guns in each arm....simultaneously.

We were instructed NOT to move during the process...those who “flinched” at the wrong moment got nasty cuts in the process! We were also advised not to watch the injection if we thought we might not be able to stomach the scene...not only ourselves, but watching others as they endured the process. A man passed out. Just one as I recall, but it was sufficient to scare the living hell out of the rest of us! I had never seen a person faint. He was completely ashen in appearance...and hit the floor like a rock! He was whisked away to be revived out of view. We did not see him until later back at the barracks.

Dog tags were issued and we were forced to endure hours of monotone dialogue from men who never took Public Speaking in High School...and several who likely never even attended High School. I had grown up in Haddonfield, in southern New Jersey. A small colonial town (George Washington slept there!) with extremely high educational standards. A fact that I was beginning to realize was NOT the “norm” for the average public...or at least not this ragtag group of men from all over the state!

We had to elect “next of kin” in the event we died while in the service as well as complete a seemingly endless pile of forms for everything from allergies and medical history to questions about our marital status and desired pay deductions.

On the third day we made our first real sacrifice. Haircuts!

I knew it was coming. I had spent the summer growing a new “doo”...long and “beach boy like” and bleached blonde by the summer sun....and hydrogen peroxide as the summer sun effect faded! I kept it flat and straight by wearing a ski cap to bed at night! I had that ski cap with me at the reception station!...trying to hold on to civilian life to the very end! I think that first haircut took all of 10 seconds. Three weeks later my drill sergeant at basic training would declare to us all: “You people all look like a bunch of hippies! You will all get haircuts today!” Of course...we had all grown at least a quarter inch of hair by then!

Sometime later that first week I developed a sever case of the flu. It dawns on me now that they may have given me a flu shot...which I have only had on two other occasions in my life. Both of those times I got a terrible case of the flu! To this day I refuse to take a flu shot. My case was so sever I was relieved of duty for nearly a week. At the end of that week my symptoms evolved into an ear infection. Not only was I away from home, miserable, in ill-fitting clothes, cold ,damp, drafty, sick...and to boot, with an ear ache! This got me another day or so, but since ear infections do not manifest outward signs, the medical personnel were extremely skeptical about my complaints and forced me to return to duty. The staff was hard pressed to find chores for all these new inductees...and some of the duty given out in those few weeks was astonishingly stupid! On my first day back on duty, My ear infection was definitely past it’s worst hours, but I was still very weak from being sick in bed for over a week. I was sent with a half dozen other men to a deserted complex of old buildings. The NCO (Non-Commissioned Officer...the Sergeant ranks) who dropped us off told us to “police the area” or pick up trash. That he would be back at noon. The others had become masters of dodging this duty....as they had been on this kind of duty assignment every day. They informed me that these NCO’s were only interested in finding a place to dump us for the day...seemingly fulfilling their orders to find something for the inductees to do. We merely had to find a good place to hide and wait for the truck to come back for us. Noon came and went. I guess they forgot about lunch! At 4 PM it was starting to get dark.

This complex was near a road I was familiar with...so I was well oriented to which way we would have to go if we were forced to walk back to the barracks. Just before dark, we gave up and began to walk. We had only proceeded about a hundred yards on the main road when a three-quarter ton truck pulled up. It was a

ON THE RIGHT TRACK

1ST Battalion 50th Association



December 2024

Page | 8

specialist from our barracks area. The Sergeant had finally remembered us and sent him to pick us up! Shortly after this event, they backed off on the ridiculous duty and let us stay in the barracks and read each day. It was getting too cold to be outside without a good reason.

Sometime near the end of the "ordeal" at Fort Dix, my parents visited and the photo at right was taken. The main reception building is in the rear and I stood in front of my first car...1956 Chevy...saluting...with the wrong hand! THAT would soon be corrected!)

Day 18 we were finally given orders. I was to be reassigned to Fort Hood, Texas, for my Basic Training.

The next day we were given an advance on our first paycheck! It was a dismally small amount, but it was money! Even if we had no place to spend it, we felt "bona fide"! As it would turn out, the money came in handy in

Texas. We were briefed on our travel arrangements for the next day. A large contingent of trainees was traveling together. Two bus loads. We had two Sergeants accompanying us and we were leaving from Philadelphia on American airlines the next day! I recall being disappointed that I would pass so close to my hometown and not be able to see anyone. I was also a bit anxious over the fact that I had never been in an airplane in my life!

The bus trip was uneventful. We arrived at Philadelphia Airport and were allowed to use the pay phones in the waiting area of our departing flight...but the lines were too long...and I gave up when it became obvious the guys ahead of me were going to hog the phones for as long as they could.

I should mention that this was to be my first airplane ride! And I was given a window seat! I'm not sure if I was thrilled or terrified. Our aircraft was an American Airlines propeller passenger plane, and we were scheduled to make several stops along the way to Texas. We departed from Philadelphia in mid Morning and with each successive landing and takeoff...I became a more seasoned traveler. The stewardesses were all beautiful and very friendly! The food was fantastic! And we all were pampered to distraction! The flight took hours. With all the landings and takeoffs with the accompanying luggage removal, passenger changes, and the time zone difference, it was well after dark when we flew into Love Field in Dallas, Texas. We went directly to our waiting bus and began the 3 hour trip to Fort hood...through exotically western sounding towns like Waco! It was a bit exciting for a middle class kid from the suburbs of Philadelphia in southern New Jersey!



REUNION INFORMATION

The following page has the registration for next year's reunion. The registration fee is based on past reunions and assuming the cost will be at least as much as before. We do have enough in the treasury to cover any potential shortages.

This is the information we have at this time. More information will follow at a later date.
Submitted by John Topper, edited by Lorene Burch

ON THE RIGHT TRACK

1ST Battalion 50th Association

December 2024

Page | 9



1st Battalion 50th Infantry Association

Reunion 5-9 May 2025

Fort Benning, Georgia

Registration Form

Member Name _____ Phone Number _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

E-mail Address _____ Badge Name _____ Shirt Size _____

Guest Name _____ Badge Name _____ Shirt Size _____

(Use separate sheet for additional guests)

Arrival Date _____ Departure Date _____ Hotel Name _____

(Host Hotel is Hampton Inn and Suites, Phenix City, AL)

Host Hotel is the Hampton Inn, Phenix City (866)799-3642 for reservations. YOU MUST make your hotel reservations DIRECT with either the Hampton or other hotel of your choice. Submitting this registration form does NOT cover your hotel reservations. Ask for 1/50 rate of \$119. (cutoff for this rate is 15 April, 2025). If you have any reservation problems, please contact Sales Manager Michelle Spivey at (334) 664-0776. NOTE5: Do not call the Phenix Inn Property and ask for Michelle. Her office is not on site in Phenix City.

Registration Procedure:

Registration Cutoff Dates:

Registration Costs:

(Per Person)

Early Registration: Before April 15. \$200

Registration: After April 15. \$250

Mail this form along with check to:

Gary Quint, Secretary
1st Battalion, 50th Infantry Association
438 Fairway Lane
Kirkwood MO 63122

Please make check payable to: 1st Bn 50th Infantry Association

Registration Fee Includes:

6 May Evening Reception

7 May Lunch, Dinner, Buses

8 May Lunch, Dinner, Buses

9 May Buses

Also: Gifts for hosts, Event Shirt & Hat, Auction Items, Door Prizes

ON THE RIGHT TRACK

1ST Battalion 50th Association

December 2024

Page | 10



Gary Quint
438 Fairway Lane
Kirkwood, Mo. 63122