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# *Veterans Salute* *2014*



# Jimmy Young -- U.S. Army, Afghanistan

By Larry Franklin

For Vet Salute 2014

“My whole military career I’ve been training for this. It just came when I was 56 instead of 26, but that’s the way it is.”

That was Jimmy Young’s reaction when he learned in 2007 that he was being called to active duty in the Army as part of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. He was a lieutenant colonel at the time and spent 13 months in Afghanistan.

But the road that led to a combat zone eight time zones away from Clinton was long and winding (See accompanying story).

Young was serving in the mobilization division at the adjutant general’s building at the S.C. National Guard headquarters in Columbia, where he’d been since 1997. His job was getting the troops ready to be sent to either Afghanistan or Iraq (Operation Iraqi Freedom).

South Carolina National Guard units had been called for active duty in the two combat zones for years. The state’s procedures for getting the troops ready for combat was better than many, Young said. But it was just a matter of time before the pendulum swung to him.

His brigade had been told they were on the bubble – either Iraq or Afghanistan.

“I would have preferred Iraq,” Young said. “There was a greater need for more troops in Iraq at that time.”

As a true soldier, he didn’t want to go to the zone that was necessarily safer. He wanted to be sent to where the greater need was.

He was called to active duty on Jan. 30, 2007. He was going to Afghanistan.

But first, the 1,700 soldiers in the brigade combat team were sent to Camp Shelby, Miss., for training. The training lasted about three months.

The brigade was given seven days leave but the Army wasn’t paying to get them home to South Carolina. “The families rallied and came up with ideas to raise money to pay for buses,” Young said. Eventually, the money was raised and the 1,700 soldiers came home on buses for the last time before being sent overseas.

During the training, the company commander made sure the troops were trained in things they would be doing every day in Afghanistan. Young was assigned to the training assistance group which would mentor officers and drill sergeants at Kabul Military Training Center (KMTC), a basic training facility (like Fort Jackson) for Afghan soldiers.

Young arrived in Kuwait the third week of April, 2007. They had to stay in Kuwait a week waiting for sandstorms to clear so planes could take off.



**Lt. Col. Jimmy Young of Clinton** on active duty in Afghanistan. Afghan President Hamid Karzai is shown on a billboard in the background. Young served 37 years in the S.C. National Guard, which included 13 months in Afghanistan on active duty with the U.S. Army. -- Proto courtesy Jimmy Young

The next stop was Afghanistan. The first impression was the horrible smell, caused by centuries of no plumbing.

“The soil and the dust is filled with feces particles,” Young said. “You never get used to the smell.”

Young was assigned to Camp Phoenix, a NATO military installation in Kabul. The brigade commander was Major General Robert Livingston, who is the adjutant general of the South Carolina National Guard.

As he got off the plane in Kabul, Young saw a man riding a donkey in the distance. The man was wearing a traditional Afghan outfit and a woman was walking behind him. “I’ve stepped back in time,” Young remembers thinking.

The KMTC was fairly secure. There were ONLY an average of two RPG (rocket propelled grenade) attacks a month. “Their aim wasn’t very good,” Young said.

On his first night at Camp Alamo, inside the KMTC, Young didn’t sleep much. Maybe it was because of the sleeping bags

inside the large tents. Maybe it was the time difference. Maybe it was the realization of where he was.

He heard wailing at 3:30 a.m. It was the mullah – Islamic clergy – calling the faithful to the first of three daily prayer sessions. Each session lasted about 30 minutes.

As he stayed longer in Afghanistan, Young was given more responsibilities, which meant he left the relative safety of KMTC more often. He went out on a lot of convoys, where the danger was more imminent because of RPG attacks and IEDs (improvised explosive devices), which were often set off by either cell phones or garage door openers.

Young ran the logistical mentoring program at KMTC. He had 15 Army personnel and 18 U.S. Navy personnel with him. One group handled the supply operations for the U.S. Army in Afghanistan, making sure troops had what they needed when they needed supplies. A second larger group handled supplies for the Afghan Army.

The Afghan Army is all volunteer. Very few of them – maybe 2% — can read or write. The training is done in their native language, so the American mentors and trainers all had interpreters. Young was assigned three, all of whom were in their early 20s and attended night classes at a local university.

The soldiers Young commanded mentored the senior staff at KMTC, including the deputy commander and the senior logistics officer.

When he learned that one of them, a general in his 60s, had married a 12-year-old girl (his third wife), Young said he took out the 9MM handgun he always carried and told the man, “Where I come from, we shoot old men who marry young girls.”

“He got mad for some reason,” Young said.

**More on Page 4**



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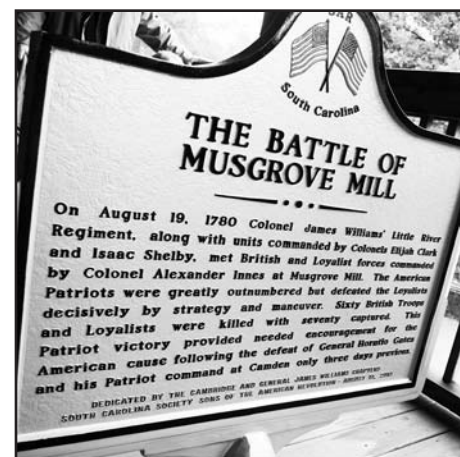
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Laurens County's military heritage is on display three times a year - May for Memorial Day, September for the Hall of Heroes, and November for Veterans Day. But throughout the years, activities in Clinton, Laurens and around Laurens County feature tributes to and activities for veterans and military families. The JROTC units at Clinton High School and Laurens District High School, and the ROTC at Presbyterian College stress self-discipline and awareness of military careers. Flag-raising and dedications are complemented by American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars members and their auxiliaries. Fourth of July and other patriotic activities honor the nation and the sacrifices of veterans. Presbyterian College this year produced a play in honor of the late Capt. Kimberly Hampton, Blue Hose graduate and fallen sol-



dier in Afghanistan. The 70th anniversary of the D-Day invasion was commemorated at Agape Senior, Laurens. Laurens County Veterans Affairs maintains benefits information for veterans from its office at the historic courthouse in Laurens, where the county's war memorials are located. The VA Office and a coordinating committee are in the process of forming a not-for-profit organization that can ac-



cept contributions to sustain and expand the Laurens County Hall of Heroes. National Guard units in Clinton and Laurens open their armories for activities and express appreciation to the county's First Responders and veterans. The nation's military heritage from the Revolution and the Civil War is maintained through Musgrove Mill State Historic Site and Pioneer Days at Culbertson Back Country Settle-

ment in Gray Court. From the days before The Shot Heard Round the World to the modern-day combat in Iraq and Afghanistan, with 1.3 million lives given in 62 major conflicts, the United States military stands strong - and Laurens County honors its soldiers, sailors, airmen and women, Marines and Guardsmen, and their families. - Photos by Vic MacDonald, except above right

# Young has variety of jobs during 37 years in military

By Larry Franklin

For Vet Salute 2014

After his sophomore year at Gardner-Webb College (now University) in Boiling Spring, N.C., Jimmy Young joined the South Carolina National Guard.

The 1968 graduate of Clinton High School spent a year on active duty - first basic training at Fort Dix, N.J., and then advanced training at Aberdeen Proving Grounds in Maryland.

He returned to Gardner-Webb and majored in history. "I thought I'd teach and coach," he said, but a semester practice teaching made him re-think that career path.

He went to work at Torrington in Clinton, where his father-in-law to be Alfio Undari worked. Undari had brought his family, including daughter Susan, to Clinton from Connecticut. Susan Undari graduated from CHS in 1969.

Young worked at Torrington's Clinton plant for a year and then spent three months at company headquarters in Connecticut before going to Torrington's new plant in Sylva, Ga., as a production scheduler.

He and Susan Undari started dating Aug. 15, 1970. They married in May, 1976.

Before the wedding, Young became part of a group put together by Torrington of workers who excelled in various business fields - Young's expertise was scheduling and logistics.

The teams traveled throughout the United States, fun for a bachelor. Not much fun for a newlywed. "After I got married, I was packing and leaving at least once a month," Young said. "I didn't feel like that was conducive to a happy marriage."

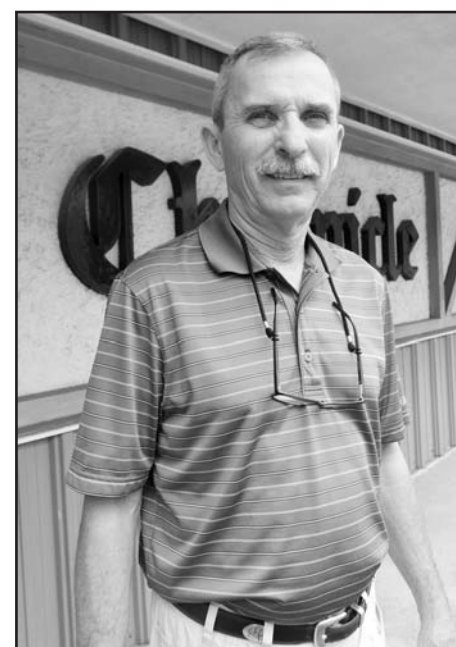
Susan, who was living in Sylva, found out Georgia wouldn't honor her teaching certificate.

Torrington told Young they'd transfer him back to Clinton. "But when I got home, I didn't have a job," he said.

In the fall of 1976, he started farming with his father and brother, Calvin, on 100 acres they owned and another 1,000 acres they leased. The Youngs grew wheat, barley, oats, soybeans and, from time-to-time, corn.

He had left the National Guard because of all the traveling he was doing for Torrington, but he rejoined the Clinton unit in 1979. About that same time, he was offered a job at CWS Guano in Clinton by Red Copeland and Heath Copeland Sr. as maintenance superintendent. He became general manager in 1989 and worked in that position until CWS Guano closed in 1995.

In the guard, Young reached the rank of staff sergeant, the highest rank he would obtain without attending Officer Candidate School. He completed South Carolina National Guard OCS in 1981 and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in June, 1982.



Jimmy Young retired from S.C. National Guard on Aug. 31, 2010 after 37 years. - Photo by Vic MacDonald

"I felt certain I would at least make captain," Young said. "And if I did good, there was a chance I'd be considered for major. Then, I'll make lieutenant colonel and stay in until I age out at 60."

That's exactly what happened. The officer ranks - and promotions - are very competitive, he said. All officers serve at the behest of the state's adjutant general. "You have to live by a certain code of ethics," Young said.

In 1989, Young was transferred as a first lieutenant to the 228th Signal Brigade HQ in Spartanburg as the brigade staff maintenance officer.

During those years, Young was doing monthly drills, summer camps and usually other weekend drills with two or three additional 2-week summer tours.

He admits the absences created problems at his job at CWS, but he would take leaves of absence so they didn't have to pay him when he wasn't working.

Young spent three years in Spartanburg - was promoted to captain - and then transferred back to the maintenance battalion, this time to the HQ armory on Bluff Road in Columbia.

He continued his military education, including more training at Aberdeen in Maryland and taking training and courses at Fort Lewis in Washington state.

In 1990, Young was named the company commander of the Clinton National Guard unit.

His older son Jim was born in 1979. Jim lives in Blythewood and is the maintenance superintendent at the Columbia Country Club. He and his wife Jennifer have a son and a daughter.



The Ghazi Stadium in Kabul, Afghanistan is owned by the Afghanistan National Olympic Committee. In spite of the Olympic rings on the outside of the stadium, the Olympics have never been held in Afghanistan.

-- Photo courtesy Jimmy Young

Jeffrey Young was born in 1982. He lives in Clinton and is a manufacturers representative for Jackson Furniture Company. He and Ashley have one son and are expecting a second one.

In 1992, military cutbacks caused the S.C. National Guard to deactivate the Clinton unit, along with a sister unit in Columbia. Another unit in Columbia was transferred to Clinton into the practically-new armory on Hwy. 72.

In 1994, Young was transferred back to the signal brigade in Spartanburg and was there for 18 months. His captain's slot was done away with and he was transferred to the Rear Area Operations Center (RAOC) in Columbia as an explosive ordinance demolition officer, a much more dangerous assignment.

He didn't consider leaving the National Guard. "They could have said 'we've lost your slot. Goodbye,'" Young said. "I felt privileged they retrained me to go in a different direction."

RAOC had returned from Operation Desert Storm in 1995. "They were always on the hot seat," Young said. "We were always training up for somewhere."

Much of that training took place on the West Coast - Fort Lewis in Washington and the National Training Center in California - and in Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

Young was promoted to major in 1995 and then, in 1997, he transferred to the 251st mobilization division at the adjutant general's building in Columbia as an assistant logistical officer.

"Because of Desert Storm, (the national

guard) was changing to make sure all the units in South Carolina were ready to go to combat if called up," Young said. South Carolina was ahead of the curve.

"We had people in the positions and we used them to get the units ready," he said. "The team (of which Young was a member) would split up and go to three of four different units on a drill weekend and check various things - personnel rosters, physical training records, etc."

Young's duty was checking maintenance records and operations for trucks and drivers.

Before a unit was sent into combat - by then it was Operation Iraqi Freedom - Young would set up a mock convoy. The first unit mobilized was from Mount Pleasant.

"All units had to have mobilization books with papers to help them go from civilian soldiers to fulltime Army," he said. "Once you got on active duty, you're not National Guard, you're Army."

Young developed his own set of mobilization books to streamline the process. At first the units were skeptical when the major arrived from headquarters.

"But word got around I would help them out," he said.

In 2007, Young learned the practicality of all the training when he was called to active duty in Afghanistan (see accompanying story).

After returning from active duty, Young reached the mandatory retirement age of 60 and left the S.C. National Guard as a lieutenant colonel.



# Jimmy Young

From Page 2

While in Afghanistan, Young was able to Skype almost daily with his wife Susan. "Some days I wouldn't call her because I didn't want her to know where I was," Young said.

When the cold weather arrived in Afghanistan, all the soldiers (8,000-10,000 training at one time) at KMTC and throughout Afghanistan stopped fighting and went home. "They'd come back when it got warm," Young said.

Oftentimes, the soldiers would sell at bazaars the military equipment they had been issued. "Then they would come back and want more equipment and want to know why they weren't getting paid while they were gone," Young said.

The decision was made to keep the military bases open in the winter, which created other logistical problems to overcome, he said.

Young said all three of his interpreters – two of whom have since become American citizens – want Afghanistan to be like the United States.

"I don't know if those countries can ever change," he said. "Their train of thought is so steeped in tradition, I don't know if they will ever be modern."

As part of his increasing responsibilities, Young was assigned as the 15-6 investigating officer for the Judge Advocate General. Anytime equipment was destroyed or lost that cost more than one month's enlisted man's salary, Young had to determine whether it was because of negligence or through collateral damage.

After 13 months in the combat zone, Young was sent back to the U.S. as part of

the 218<sup>th</sup> forward group. As the soldiers come back from Afghanistan, everything they were issued has to be turned in and sent back to the Army. "It wasn't state issued," Young said.

Young said there was a lieutenant colonel slot open in Iraq for five months and he was asked if he would go. "I wanted to, but the toll it took on Susan while I was in Afghanistan – she had worried herself almost to death – I didn't think it was worth it."

He retired from the national guard on Aug. 31, 2010. Had he been promoted to full colonel, he could have received a waiver from the age requirement that all guardsmen retire at age 60.

Young was told prior to going to Afghanistan he would be promoted to colonel while on active duty, but it didn't happen.

Looking back on his 37-year military career, Young says he doesn't regret anything and wouldn't do anything differently.

His proudest moment came in 1982 when he graduated from Officer Candidate School and Susan pinned his commission on him. Both his sons – Jim and Jeffrey – were there. "That meant a lot to me," Young said.

Another point of pride is that "I didn't lose any soldiers in Afghanistan."

"Some of them have told me they didn't like me over there," he said. "But they said they understand now why I was so hard on them."

"I told them the fact that we were talking about it meant it worked out," he said.

Young received a Bronze Star "for meritorious service while deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom."

The commendation says Young's "performance in a combat zone reflects great



**Christmas away from home.** Lt. Col. Jimmy Young celebrated Christmas 2008 in Afghanistan as part of Operation Enduring Freedom.

-- Photo courtesy Jimmy Young

credit upon himself, the combined Security Transition Command - Afghanistan, the United States Central Command and the United States Army."

Young received a medal of commendation from the French Army for his service in Afghanistan. He also received the U.S. Army's Legion of Merit upon his retirement.



**In Afghanistan.** Lt. Col. Jimmy Young of Clinton, left, is shown with an Afghan colonel and his son, along with another American soldier and an interpreter. -- Photo courtesy Jimmy Young

# Roy Bush -- U.S. Navy, World War II

By Vic MacDonald

For Vet Salute 2014

Navy veteran Roy Bush spotted the camera, hung around the neck of a newspaper photographer, and came close. "You know," he said, "I built my own Nikon."

Bush along with Army veteran Raymond Good were honored guests June 6 at the D-Day 70th Anniversary observance at their residence, Agape Senior in Laurens.

Neither man hit the beaches at Normandy.

Both men served their country in World War II.

They received specially made blankets with the Navy and Army emblem, and folded American Flags.

Bush, Good, families, friends and Agape staff watched a YouTube video of U.S. and British soldiers singing a tribute song.

Participants at the observance were reminded that the U.S. is losing its WWII veterans at an alarming rate - 600 per day. "Two of those 600 were very, very special to me," said Katie Coleman, the facility's

senior solutions advisor who organized the observance.

Agape Senior residents and staff wished Bush and Good well during and after the program. Both men received special military pins for their caps designating their branch of the military. Good's wife and relatives were there, and Culbertson read a description of the D-Day attack - and the heavy toll it took in Allied killed and wounded.

Throughout the United States June 6, and at the monuments on the cliffs of Normandy half a world away the world observed the seven decades since Allied forces launched the largest amphibious operation in history. Finally, they gained a foothold in Europe, months later they crushed the Nazis. A tense truce between the United States and Russia ensued, eventually turning into the U.S. vs the Soviet Union in the Cold War.

For Bush and thousands of other Americans, however, the war they served in was very hot. "They called me 'shoot and puke,'" Bush said. "I did aerial photography. I served on battleships and aircraft carriers."

"It's a serious business. Protecting the



**A salute for his service.** Roy Bush returns a salute offered to him as a WWII veteran during a D-Day 70th Anniversary observance at Agape Senior retirement community in Laurens. Bush traveled the world as a U.S. Navy photographer.

- Photos by Vic MacDonald



**Thank you.** Agape Senior in Laurens gave WWII veterans Roy Bush (pictured) and Raymond Good a "pat on the back" during D-Day 70th Anniversary observance. Bush served in the U.S. Navy during the war, mostly in the European Theater, he says, working as a photographer. Bush said he attended Navy schools for still photography, motion picture photography and camera repair.

people of America."

Bush says his wartime photographs are "classified" and archived in the nation's museums and military installations.

Bush says he never fought in combat, but "I shot a lot of photographs, some things people should not see. I really can't talk about it."

Bush said he attended three schools in Pensacola, Florida - still photography took six months, motion pictures three months and camera repair four months. On the front lines, a photographer can't just drop in to the local camera repair shop. Developing film, shipping photos and negatives, dodging bullets - all this was wartime photography in a pre-digital days. American wartime photography dates to the Civil War.

Bush said he spent most of this time in the European Theater - "I went to the Pacific at a time, but I can't talk about it," he said.

Bush will be 88 in August. He says he wants to go to Alabama, but Charleston

would be good. He wants a house. He wants to have 50-60 people come over for a holiday and he wants to cook for them. He wants to design his own galley-style kitchen, wood-work his kitchen cabinets.

His eyes light up when he talks about working in that kitchen - grabbing the spices for his cooking, putting the spices right back in the place he took them from.

Bush remembers the spectacular views in Italy and Bombay. He says he took photos on his own, not only for the military on his tours of duty. He says he entered the Navy at the end of 1944, stayed in nine years and got work as a photographer in the years after service.

"Wherever I could pick up a buck," he said.

"I like to cook, I was about a week away from getting my chef's license. The biggest thing I've had to do is stay alive."

"I like the water. I'm a Low-lander - the swamps. I want to catch fish," he says, "and fry 'em up."





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# Thomas Gentry -- U.S. Army, Korea

By Vic MacDonald

For Vet Salute 2014

Thomas Gentry had a simple skill that sustained him through a brief time in the military that carried him from Georgia, to Virginia, to Indiana, to New Jersey and eventually to Korea and Japan. "I could type," he said.

After leaving the military, Gentry settled into a 32-year career as a bookkeeper for the City of Greenwood.

"I would have stayed in the Army," he said, "but my parents were not well. I stayed in the Reserves."

Gentry's father died when Tom was 27, and his mother passed six years later. That was 1961, he and wife Edna Duncan Gentry had married in October of that year.

Now Tom and Edna live at Bailey Manor Christian Retirement Community in Clinton. This month they attended grandson Regan's Clinton High School graduation with their daughter Michele, a CHS teacher, son-in-law Lance Freeman and younger grandson Riley.

Gentry said the family is planning to travel this week to Richmond, Va., to hear Regan give a speech.



**Veteran of the Pacific.** Tom Gentry, formerly of Greenwood and now a resident of Bailey Manor Christian Retirement Community in Clinton, served in Korea and Japan before a career of more than three decades working for The City of Greenwood.

- Photos by Vic MacDonald



**Reminders of military service.** Photo of a young Tom Gentry is surrounded by his medals in a framed memento from his and wife Edna's apartment. Relocating from Greenwood to Clinton, the Gentrys this month attended grandson Regan's graduation from Clinton High School and plan to hear him speak to the National Beta Club Convention in Richmond, Va. Regan Freeman is completing a year as national secretary.

Regan is completing a year as the secretary of the National Beta Club.

"We have never heard him give a speech," the proud grandfather said, beaming at the thought of his grandson addressing hundreds of the nation's best and brightest high school students.

The Gentrys and Freemans "cut a rug" June 13 at Bailey Manor's 50s Night Sock Hop.

Tom Gentry briskly walks the halls of Bailey Manor, Clinton's former hospital, and Michele and Regan are frequent volunteers. Edna's green thumb can be seen in the summer flowers adorning the Manor's front entrance and fountain area.

Tom Gentry lived in Greenwood 70 years. Now, he and Edna are carving out a later-life in Clinton.

In September, 1950, Gentry embarked on his time in the military. He took training at Fort Stewart, Ga., Fort Lee, Va., Fort Benjamin Harrison in Indiana, and Fort Dix, N.J. By the time October rolled around, he was assigned to Korea.

"We didn't see the ground til May," he

remembers. "There was snow on the mountains. It is a very pretty country. The towns are well-kept."

Gentry befriended two Korean doctors at a hospital. "They were good to me," he said. Weather prevented the doctors from taking Gentry on an adventure, his leaving-the-service party in Seoul. "We had to have the party at the hospital."

If they had made it to Seoul, chances are it would not have been an ordinary going-away party.

Gentry says, at that time, he was a better than average singer and dancer.

In Korea, Gentry said he was stationed about a mile behind enemy lines. "We could see the flares. We could hear the trains taking prisoners back and forth."

After handling supplies in the hospital, Gentry shipped out - sailing on a New Year's Day, he remembers - to northern Japan by the Yellow Sea. Remaining on duty there from January through May, "they shipped me back to my home," in July 1952.

He worked with a wholesale food dis-

tributor with schools and commercial clients, before handling payroll and accounts receivable for the City of Greenwood. Gentry said he "bought" his military time to add to his government time with Greenwood to make up his retirement. He had a major heart attack in 1978, and has limited mobility but an indomitable spirit.

Gentry started singing at 7-years-old in his church's junior choir, and spent 47 years singing at church, Laurel Baptist, doing "quartet and trio work." He learned swing dancing and the shag. "Business school, just out of the service," he said, "that was my hey-day with dance. My cousin was in the Marines, in Hawaii, and he said he learned how to Jitterbug."

Gentry said he is interested now in gospel music.

At the Sock Hop, Gentry surrounded by family smiled broadly and had a great time dancing in a chair. From Fats to Buddy Holly, Elvis to Johnny Cash, the 1950s - when countless Americans like Tom Gentry answered their country's call - came alive again.



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