

Army veteran Robert Bohm recalls days in Vietnam



Robert Bohm has only a few pictures of his days with the 9th Infantry in Vietnam. Drafted in 1966, Bohm received two Purple Hearts. PHOTO BY CHRIS HOWELL | DEMOCRAT

By Chris Howell

chrish@sedaliademocrat.com

obert and Donna Bohm live a quiet life in rural Pettis County, enjoying their retirement and the time they spend together. "Most of my life, I have been in the Sedalia area," Robert Bohm said. "Since I was 3 years old."

Robert and Donna were high school sweethearts in the Smith-Cotton class of '64 and had a bright future. Unfortunately, the winds of war were blowing steadily in southeast Asia and Bohm ultimately got a letter from the draft board.

"That was in '66," Bohm recalled. "It was a late December draft and there was like maybe 14 of us out of Sedalia drafted the same day. Went up for induction and left the Sedalia depot downtown."

There was little doubt in Bohm's mind as to where he was headed.

"The Vietnam War had built up to a boiling point," Bohm said. "We knew without a doubt we would end up going overseas to Vietnam."

The young draftees were gathered in Kansas City for processing.

"I remember standing in a room with like 35 or 40 of the local boys," Bohm said. "They started going down the line and this lieutenant said, 'OK, you are going to be drafted to the Marines,' and there was three of us out of Sedalia drafted into the Marines that time and the rest of us went into the Army."

Bohm was selected for the 9th Infantry

and trained at Fort Hood in Texas.

"That was their base. They shipped us in different areas for different training purposes," Bohm said. "I was at Fort Sam Houston for a while down in Texas, then we went to Fort Riley in Kansas. There, we did some basic helicopter moves, getting on or getting off airborne helicopters. It was a good base for training, and it was local. If I got a three-day weekend, we could buzz back home."

Bohm married Donna for love, and they expedited their union due to the uncertainty of Robert's future.

"We went ahead and got married because I knew there would be a benefit to the family, she would get compensated for me being overseas and it would put us in a better place if I made it through and survived," Bohm said. "That would be wholly great, and it worked out that way."

The young couple were able to spend a few precious weeks together in Kansas before Bohm was deployed overseas.

The troops took a grueling 42-day voyage on a troop ship to Vietnam.

"They had beds stacked 14 high in the bottom of this ship," Bohm recalled. "I don't know, there may have been 1,000 troops for 42 days going across the ocean. That was stress enough because you just didn't know from one day to the next what was going to happen."

The 9th Infantry Division had thousands of troops in country and once Bohm landed, he was stationed at Ling Binh, Bear Cat, and Dong Tam. Much of his time was spent patrolling the lush countryside.



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"We were on a mission there in the delta with five or six of the armored troop vessels," Bohm recalled. "They carried about 35 to 40 troops in the belly and were like landing ships that they used in World War II, you know, they dropped the gate, and everybody ran out of the belly of them."

Reduced in size to fit in the narrow channels of Vietnam's rice patties, the vehicles had become the go-to transportation in the swampy delta.

"We were on those quite often," Bohm said. "The two times I got blown out of the water was when mortars hit those. I was just one of the very lucky fortunate ones; they picked me up off the ground, stuck me in a helicopter and got me out of there. I can never, ever forget because the pilot of this helicopter was 20 years old, like I was. He said just lay flat on the floor and I did. When he took off, he was chopping limbs off, we were taking on fire as he lifted out of there."

Bohm was flown offshore to a hospital ship to be patched up and even was able to meet Gen. Omar Bradley when he was honored for his gallantry.

"That's when we had some of our awards," Bohm said. "I got to shake that general's hand twice for that incursion. I got a Purple Heart for that."

A similar battle later had similar results.

"I got a Purple Heart there," Bohm said, "and the bronze stars came right along with the Purple Hearts for each battle." Back in the states, Donna was worried sick because she hadn't received the regular correspondence from her husband.

"No, it was sometime later, because I was not notified of any of that," Donna recalled. "I tried to find something out when I didn't get letters or hear anything. I finally got a letter from him, one of the guys in the bed next to him gave him stationary to write me.

"That's how I found out that he had been in the hospital," Donna said, "and when he got back to his headquarters, they were glad to see him because they thought something happened to him. They didn't know where he was."

"All of these guys got split up," Bohm said. "You had dog tags and everything and they knew who you were, but they didn't know where you were."

Bohm returned to active duty, but after being blown up twice, he was justifiably on edge.

"Our term was like December to January, that was the year," Bohm remembered. "We knew we were going to have to be flown out within a month. Every day that went by, you were really on guard everywhere of something coming in to get you. You didn't want that to happen, being that close to coming home."

A remote airfield had been set up with metal strips in the jungle and just big enough for the 747s sent in to bring the troops home.

"Everybody just melted into their 530-0146.

seats, so glad to be on there," Bohm said. "The pilot said to fasten your seat belts, we're going to take a ride, and I mean to tell you, when he opened the throttles on that thing, you were just hammered back into the seat. They had a short runway, a short time to lift off, and they had a full load of troops on there."

They left Vietnam in the predawn darkness, knowing they had completed their mission and survived.

"When we were up in the air 10,000 feet, we were taking a big sigh relief, we made it," Bohm said. "We were 20 years old, we were doing what we did for the country we lived in, for family, for friends, for children. That's the purpose we were over there, and we tried to do the best we could. A lot of them did it to the very end and they didn't make it, but the ones of us who did appreciate every minute of their help."

Robert Bohm was honored with two Purple Hearts, an Army Commendation Medal, a National Defense Service Medal with two Bronze Service Stars, and numerous other awards.

Donna is appreciative of Robert's service in Vietnam and is happy he was able to return home to the blessings of three children, three grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

"We've been married 57 and a half years, we've lived out here 58," Donna said. "So it's fine, it's nice."

Chris Howell can be reached at 660-30-0146. ☆ ☆







Warrensburg Star-Journal

Air Force veteran Ron Camirand, a man of many talents



Air Force veteran Ron Camirand, 87, who lives at Primrose Retirement Community in Sedalia, served at Whiteman Air Force Base during the Cold War, 1954-1958. PHOTO BY FAITH BEMISS-MCKINNEY | DEMOCRAT

By Faith Bemiss-McKinney faithb@sedaliademocrat.com

ir Force veteran Ron Camirand, 87, of Sedalia, lives at Primrose Retirement Community and came to Whiteman Air Force Base in 1954 from Cambridge, Massachusetts. While in the service, the multi-talented man was on tours of duties worldwide as an aircraft engine mechanic.

Camirand said he stayed in the Sedalia area after leaving the military in 1958 because he met his future and late wife, Rosemary Crook. The couple has one child, Rhonda Hecker, of Illinois. Camirand, who achieved the rank of Airman 2nd Class with an E-5 rating, worked on KC-97 Air Refueling Tankers during the Cold War, which took him to six different countries, Greenland, Iceland, England, Newfoundland, Bermuda, and French Morocco in North Africa.

Camirand noted he had to ensure the engines were "copasetic" before the planes took off.

"We were basically on duty 24/7," he explained. "If something was wrong with the plane, we stayed there an hour, two days, however long it took to fix the plane.

"Sometimes you got by with a day or two, something like that," he continued. "But we also spent some time in changing engines. We spent three days doing that."

When asked why he joined the Air Force instead of another branch of service, Camirand, who was already serving with the Army National Guard at the time, said it was a "funny story."

"All us guys from Cambridge were hanging around on a corner," he noted. "And all of a sudden, somebody said, 'You know what? We should join the Navy.""

At the time, the Navy Recruiting Office had a promotional opportunity for those who joined.

"Join the Navy and See the World," Camirand said. "You come in under the buddy-buddy system. So, all five or six of us went over to Boston to join up with the Navy."

Unfortunately, they ran out of time and had to go back. When Camirand told his mother, Margaret (Gallager) Camirand, who was Scottish, he was going to join the Navy, she lost it.

"She told me I was an idiot, I was dumb, I was stupid," he said with a smile. "She told me all these nice accolades because of my experience in the National Guard.

"Basically, she said, 'You should join the Army," he added. "When it came time to go back to Boston to the recruiters, I came across an old friend of mine, and he was talking to an Air Force guy. So, to make a long story short, I joined the Air Force."

Joining the Air Force didn't make his mother any happier. She was still upset because, at the time, joining the Army meant he would only have to serve two years, but in the Air Force, he'd serve four. Although his mom was unhappy, he did what he felt was best and joined the Air Force.



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VETERANS DAY



Some of his memories include having powdered milk and eggs for the first time while in Bermuda. And while in French Morocco, there were tribal wars taking place. So, the Base was issued weapons, and the service members were told if the tribes came onto the Base, they would have to defend it.

"And if you have to shoot somebody, then shoot them," he noted. "It didn't happen."

On his way to Greenland, they had engine problems, and the captain told them to put on their parachutes.

"There was a Master Sergeant next to me," Camirand said. "And I told him, 'If you open up that door, you better be behind me because I'm not jumping out of this plane. You'll have to push me out."

Luckily, their plane arrived safely in Greenland.

While serving, he also had a thorn in his side – Master Sgt. Curry, who didn't like him and made Camirand's life miserable. Camirand became Curry's "whipping boy." But not to be outdone, Camirand stood up to him many times until he was respected.

While at Whiteman AFB, Camirand served with the 8th Air Force, SAC Division, 340th Bomb Wing.

Since he was a child, Camirand has enjoyed creating cartoons and drawing. He now has a notebook filled with his art, which he calls a hobby. Some drawings are given as gifts to family and friends. A man of many talents, he also enjoys sewing and often sewed costumes for his daughter when she competed in state baton twirling championships at the Missouri State Fair.

He wears a leather vest with all his patches meticulously sewn on. One rather large patch graces the back of his vest — adorned with a Bald Eagle with the saying, "The Nation That Forgets Its Defenders Will Itself Be Forgotten." The patch is in memory of the U.S. troops and defenders of America's freedom.

Faith Bemiss-McKinney can be reached at 660-530-0289 or on Twitter @flbemiss.



While in the Air Force, veteran Ron Camirand was an engine mechanic for the KC-97 Air Refueling Tanker. His tour
of duties included six different countries.PHOTO BY FAITH BEMISS-MCKINNEY | DEMOCRAT



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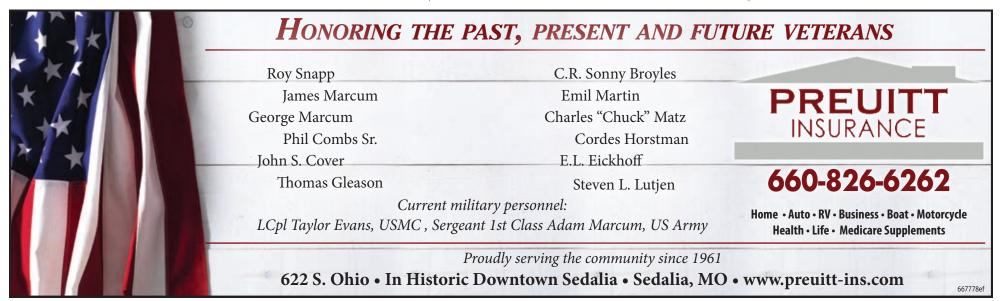
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Ron Camirand, an Air Force veteran, sews on all of his patches himself. This prominent patch honors U.S. troops and defenders of America's freedom. PHOTOS BY FAITH BEMISS-MCKINNEY | DEMOCRAT

A man of many talents, veteran Ron Camirand enjoys drawing and creating cartoons; he holds one of his favorite drawings.



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VETERANS DAY



AREA VETERAN RESOURCES



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Missouri Veterans Home-Warrensburg

1300 Veterans Road, Warrensburg 660-543-5064 mvc.dps.mo.gov/homes/warrensburg.php

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Harry S. Truman Memorial Veterans' Hospital

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Warrensburg VA Clinic

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Jefferson City VA Clinic

3430 W. Edgewood Drive, Jefferson City Main phone: 573-635-0233 Mental health care: 573-635-0233



Sedalia VA Clinic

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S8 | Friday, November 10, 2023

THE U.S. AIR FORCE SONG $\star \star \star \star \star$

Off we go into the wild blue yonder, Climbing high into the sun; Here they come zooming to meet our thunder, At 'em now, Give 'em the gun! Down we dive, spouting our flame from under, Off with one helluva roar! We live in fame or go down in flame. Hey! Nothing'll stop the U.S. Air Force!

Brilliant minds fashioned a crate of thunder, Sent it high into the blue; Valiant hands blasted the world asunder; How they lived God only knew! Boundless souls dreaming of skies to conquer Gave us wings, ever to soar! With scouts before and bombers galore. Hey! Nothing'll stop the U.S. Air Force!

Here's a toast to the host Of those who love the vastness of the sky, To a friend we send a message of the brave who serve on high. We drink to those who gave their all of old, Then down we roar to score the rainbow's pot of gold. A toast to the host of those we boast, the U.S. Air Force!

Off we go into the wild sky yonder, Keep the wings level and true; If you'd live to be a grey-haired wonder Keep the nose out of the blue! Fly to fight, guarding the nation's border, We'll be there, followed by more! In echelon we carry on. Oh, nothing'll stop the U.S. Air Force!

See photos of Air Force veterans on Page 22.

THE MARINES' HYMN

From the Halls of Montezuma To the shores of Tripoli; We fight our country's battles In the air, on land, and sea: First to fight for right and freedom And to keep our honor clean; We are proud to claim the title Of United States Marine. Our flag's unfurled to every breeze From dawn to setting sun; We have fought in every clime and place Where we could take a gun; In the snow of far-off Northern lands And in sunny tropic scenes, You will find us always on the job The United States Marines. Here's health to you and to our Corps Which we are proud to serve; In many a strife we've fought for life And never lost our nerve. If the Army and the Navy Ever look on Heaven's scenes, They will find the streets are guarded By United States Marines.

> See photos of Marine veterans on Page 26.





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VETERANS DAY

Sedalia Democrat







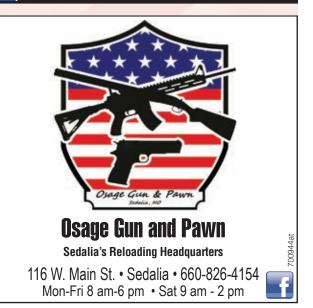
RICK BALL ARMY 1969-1970



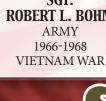


SGT. **ROBERT L. BOHM** ARMY 1966-1968 VIETNAM WAR





RONALD W. ANDERSON ARMY 1968-1971



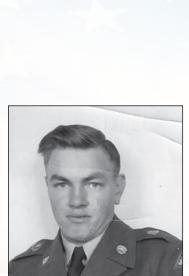
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CPL. WALTER BOPP ARMY 1942-1945 WORLD WAR II

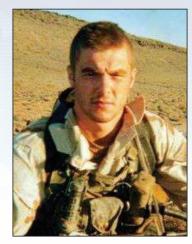


CPL.

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ARMY

1953-1955



CPL. **CHRISTOPHER A. BEMISS** ARMY 2001-2007 AFGHANISTAN AND IRAQ



SGT. **LEONARD R. BENSON** ARMY 1942-1945 WORLD WAR II

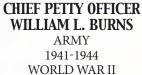


E-4 **CHARLES BOND** ARMY 1942-1944 WORLD WAR II











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E-5 MELVIN FICKEN ARMY 1968-1971 VIETNAM





E-8 ROSS GIACOMO ARMY 1967-1992 VIETNAM



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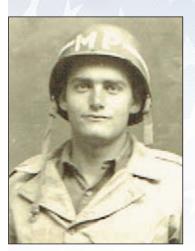
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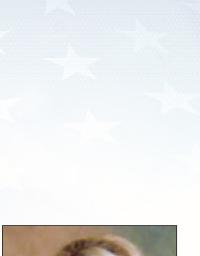


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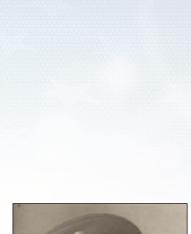


SPC. 5 E-5 GARY KIRK ARMY 1969-1971 VIETNAM





MAJ. JERR RICKER ARMY SECURITY AGENCY 1965-1967 VIETNAM





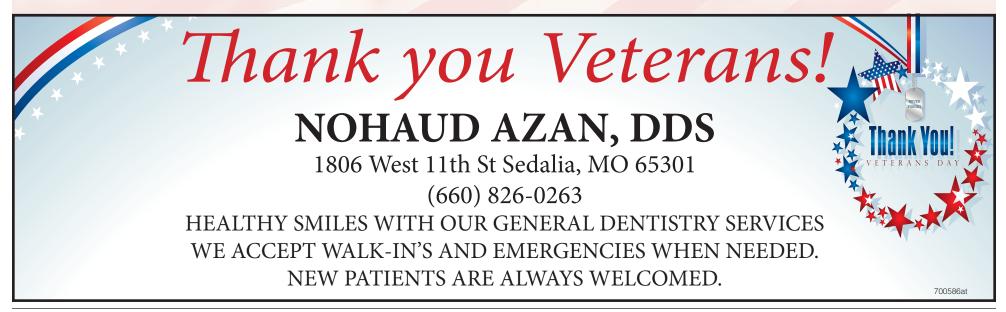
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March along, sing our song, with the Army of the free Count the brave, count the true, who have fought to victory We're the Army and proud of our name We're the Army and proudly proclaim

> First to fight for the right, And to build the Nation's might, And The Army Goes Rolling Along Proud of all we have done, Fighting till the battle's won, And the Army Goes Rolling Along.

Then it's Hi! Hi! Hey! The Army's on its way. Count off the cadence loud and strong (TWO! THREE!) For where e'r we go, You will always know That The Army Goes Rolling Along.

> Valley Forge, Custer's ranks, San Juan Hill and Patton's tanks, And the Army went rolling along Minute men, from the start, Always fighting from the heart, And the Army keeps rolling along. Men in rags, men who froze, Still that Army met its foes, And the Army went rolling along. Faith in God, then we're right, And we'll fight with all our might, As the Army keeps rolling along.



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VETERANS DAY

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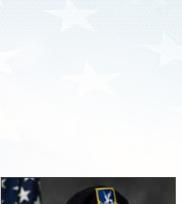
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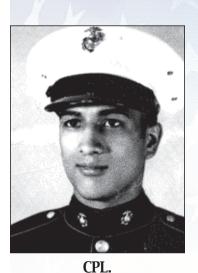
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SGT. E-5 JAMES E. INMAN MARINE 1956-1951



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UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS



ROBERT RINEHART MARINE 1962-1966 VIETNAM





RESOLVE IN SYRIA



MARINE 1972-1976



☆ ☆ ☆ NOVEMBER 11th ☆ ☆ ☆



Warrensburg Star-Journal

VETERANS DAY

Friday, November 10, 2023 | S27



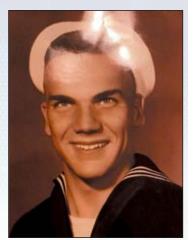
ETN2 WILLIAM ANDERSON NAVY 1961-1967





P01 E6 LAFAYETTE BOHLING NAVY





EM2 WILLIAM W. BUSHMEYER JR. NAVY 1952-1956 KOREA



E-4 JOHN A. BECK NAVY 1959-1965 VIETNAM



MA1 PATRICK D. BOSWELL NAVY 1987-1992





RSMN LOYDE T. CANIDA NAVY 1948-1951 KOREAN



E-4

TERRY CRABB

NAVY

1973-1977



E-3 LAWRENCE B. HOWE NAVY 1980-1984





E-5 CHAD HALL NAVY 1991-1998 E-7 THOMAS HALL NAVY 1967-1993 VIETNAM, COLD WAR, GULF WAR





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LLOYD HOWE NAVY 1977-1988



GUNNERS MATE 3 PAUL M. KELLMAN JR.

NAVY

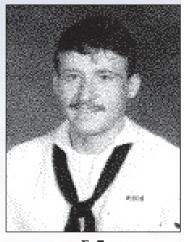
1968-1970

VIETNAM

E-7 BRUCE MEYER NAVY 1972-1994 VIETNAM



MMF E-2 HELENA HOWE NEWSOME NAVY 1996-1997



E-5 SAMUEL SAMSAL NAVY 1985-1989



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SSGT. DAVID A. STREET NAVY AND ARMY 1952-1994 KOREAN



ANCHORS AWEIGH



Stand Navy out to sea, Fight our battle cry; We'll never change our course, So vicious foe steer shy-y-y-y. Roll out the TNT, Anchors Aweigh. Sail on to victory And sink their bones to Davy Jones, hooray!

Anchors Aweigh, my boys, Anchors Aweigh. Farewell to foreign shores, We sail at break of day-ay-ay-ay. Through our last night ashore, Drink to the foam, Until we meet once more. Here's wishing you a happy voyage home.

Blue of the mighty deep: Gold of God's great sun. Let these our colors be Till all of time be done, done, done, done. On seven seas we learn

> Navy's stern call: Faith, courage, service true, With honor, over honor, over all.



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