

Vietnam Veteran earns bronze star

By Jake Heronemus
Staff reporter

Melvin King served in the Vietnam War as an Army infantry from 1967 to 1970. He enlisted and started boot camp and advanced individual training, and he was discharged as a sergeant. "You automatically get private first class when you go over to Vietnam. Almost immediately after setting foot in the country I made corporal. I was in Vietnam for four months before I was made sergeant."

In his time in the service, King earned a Bronze Star for meritorious achievement in ground operations against hostile forces in the Republic of Vietnam as well as several awards for his marksmanship with assorted rifles like the M14. "If anyone says they aren't scared they're lying," King said. "I know I was scared."

After his time in Vietnam, King went to Germany where he bought several steins as keepsakes, in-

cluding ones that played music when you opened them. His son now owns the singing steins. King broke his arm in a game of football while in Germany before he was discharged, which put him on medical rest for a while once he got back home.

After the war King made tools for Boeing, doing the same job his son does now except by hand instead of with machines. He worked at Boeing in 1974 for a year until he was laid off. King returned to Boeing in 1979 and stayed for seven years. After that he worked at Cessna until 2004 when he retired. In March 2012, King moved to the Kansas Veterans Home where he resides now.

"Veteran's Day is the day when I always used to take my vacation and take off because I think it should be an observed holiday," said King.

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Robert Tatum served in the army during the Korean War. When he was stationed down in the Panama Canal Zone he wore a Navy uniform. He appreciates Veterans Day because he believes everyone who serves deserves respect. (Kelsey Gresham/Collegian photographer)

Corporal takes honor flight to Washington D.C. to visit memorials

By Hanna House
Staff reporter

To Cpl. Robert Tatum, Veterans Day is a time to look back at all those who fought and give respect to all who have fought for our country no matter what time period. Everyone who fought deserves respect.

Before enlisting, Tatum lived on a farm near Augusta.

Leaving behind his mother and grandparents, he enlisted in the Army in 1946 and served until 1952.

"I spent two years down in the Panama Canal Zone then I got out, re-enlisted, and then got caught up in Korea," said Tatum.

One of Tatum's memorable experiences during the war involved

two North Koreans giving them a visit in the middle of the night.

"While I was sleeping I kept hearing clapping. I unzipped my bag and there were two North Korean soldiers standing over me wanting to surrender. They woke me up to surrender," said Tatum.

Tatum served a couple of years in the Panama Canal Zone on a ferry boat.

While there, he was given Navy equipment and a uniform instead of the more restricting Army attire.

After Tatum was discharged, he worked at Boeing Aircraft Company in Wichita for 30 years.

He moved to the Kansas Veterans Home nine months ago.

To Tatum, Veterans Day means giving respect to all veterans,

even if they served during an unpopular time like during Vietnam.

One of the things that happens to celebrate Veterans Day are Honor Flights. Honor Flights takes veterans to Washington D.C. so they can visit the war memorials.

Tatum was one of the veterans who was able to participate in this tradition.

"We went to Washington D.C. for two days to observe the WWII memorial and all the others," said Tatum.

Like many returning from war, Tatum sometimes wonders why he made it back while so many others did not.

Hanna House is a freshman majoring in communication. You can contact her at hanna.house@sckans.edu.



Melvin King served in the Vietnam War in the Army infantry from 1967 to 1970. He received a bronze star for his actions during hostile ground operations. He made sergeant right before he was discharged. After the Army King made tools; his son now makes tools. (Hunter Bohannon/Collegian photographer)