

Colonel Sheldon D. Johnson

Infantry Officer Candidate School Class RC2-71

I joined the Michigan Army National Guard in 1964. I was going to college on a part-time basis. I was concerned that I would get drafted and add many years to my schooling. I had a friend who was in the 2nd Battalion 182nd FA. He said that this was a great organization and that I would enjoy being a member. He was very correct, at that time all our senior officers and NCOs were veterans from World War II or Korea. These were outstanding men.

I was trained as a 13E10. I acquired a great love for all the aspects of The Field Artillery. When my six year tour was coming to an end, all my senior officers from the Battalion Commander down, asked me to stay in the National Guard. They also said they would like me to go to OCS and become an officer. I made the decision to stay in the National Guard and attend Artillery OCS. This was a 23 week course, the infantry OCS (Special Reserve Class was an 11 week course that ended up being 13 weeks). This was the course that the National Guard would send me to. The plan was to attend the infantry OCS at Fort Benning and then attend Artillery Officer Basic Course at Fort Sill the next training year. I completed my training and was now a 29 year old Second Lieutenant.

For the next eight years, I served in all the firing battery positions sometimes twice in different units. At the end of my three-year tour as a battery commander, the Army was having an issue, retaining mid-level officers. The Army and the National Guard came together to set up a program for 200 qualified combat arms officers to serve in Europe. This program was called captains to Europe and was a 30 month program. I was approached by our readiness group Regular Army officers. They asked me to consider going on this tour and said they would recommend me for it. I talked this over with my family and they agreed to do it. This would be an accompanied tour.

I was assigned to the 42nd Field Artillery Brigade in Giessen, Germany. I was next assigned to the Second Battalion, 92nd Field Artillery at Rivers Barracks. There, because of my gunnery background, I was made the Battalion Fire Direction Officer. This was a dream come true for me as an artillery officer. I served in this position for approximately 15 months. I then was selected to be the Battalion S-3 another dream come true. During this assignment we brought in TAC-Fire to our battalion and our direct supported unit the 11th ACR. I was the OIC for this Fielding. We were recognized as having conducted a very successful Fielding by the Fielding team. This brought my tour to the end, I was asked to stay on active duty for an additional 90 days so that my replacement could attend the TAC-Fire school, my family was not interested.

I returned to the Michigan Army National Guard and started over again as the battalion fire direction officer. My next assignments were Battalion S3, and Executive Officer. I was selected for battalion command in November 1989, This was an 8 inch SP Unit (M-110). I commanded this unit for 36 months. During this period our unit was selected to become an M270-MLRS unit. I commanded this unit for the next 24 months during our fielding of the MLRS System. This brought my 60 month Battalion Command to an end. I was then assigned to our state headquarters. I was selected for O-6 promotion by a Department of the Army board.

The policy of the National Guard is that you must have a position to be promoted. This required me to retire from the National Guard to accept the promotion. I did this and accepted my promotion to O-6, as a member of the individual ready reserve. I still wanted to continue my military career in order to do this I had to earn 50 points per year. This would allow me to apply for other assignments.

I started this by doing the Field Artillery Officer refresher course, I wanted to be current as possible in my branch. There are many ways a member of the IRR can earn retirement points; one is to drill with an active reserve unit (non-pay status).

This is the method I chose; the higher headquarters of my former battalion is a Military Police Brigade commanded by a BG. I met with the organization and presented my plan. The Brigade Commander approved my plan and would allow me to drill with them.

The next five years I drilled with the MP Brigade, teaching classes, mentoring the Artillery commanders, inspecting their training and maintenance. I also attended two annual trainings periods with the Brigade. This enabled me to finish my career serving in the branch I love, the Field Artillery.

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