



Ft. Knox Basic Combat Training

9 October to 4 December 1967

BY PETER HENDERSON

I enlisted in the Army at the age of twenty-four after an extended college career. I was assigned to Company A, 11th Battalion, 3rd Brigade, USATCA at Ft Knox.

At the first gathering of our platoon I was in culture shock. The average age of these men was nineteen, and they came from Michigan, Ohio, Tennessee, and Kentucky. I was way overweight and they were in good shape, just getting out of high school, or they were outdoorsmen from the hills of Appalachia. At our first platoon meeting our drill sergeant looked at me and said, "Son, fifty pounds of you belong to me."

For such a diverse group we bonded quickly and became very close. We all had nicknames for each other. Mine was, of course, "Pops," and yes, the fifty pounds was gone by completion of Basic Training.

Graduation day was a very happy and sad moment for our platoon; happy at completing Basic Training, but sad as we were now going our separate ways. Just after graduating in December 1967, orders for AIT began to arrive, but not all at once. With each group's departure we experienced a loss as we knew we might never see each other again. I was the very last man to receive my orders for Fort Holabird in January 1968, as the Tet Offensive began.

Even after fifty years I still think of these men and wonder just how many survived the war. ■

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