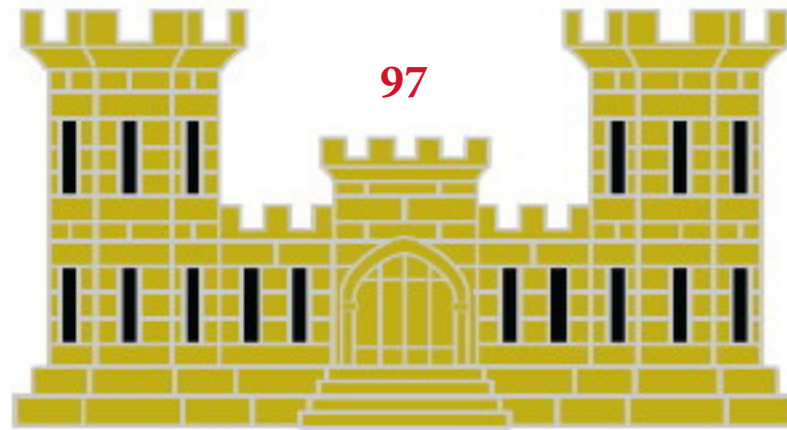


97th Engineer Battalion (Construction)



NO TASK TOO GREAT

OCTOBER 1933 - OCTOBER 1971

The 97th Engineer Battalion (Construction) originally appeared on the rolls of the Regular Army on 1 October 1933 as the 56th Engineer Battalion (Separate). Over four years later, on 1 January 1938 the unit was redesigned as the 97th Engineer Battalion (Separate). The battalion was first activated for full military service at Camp Blanding, Florida, on 1 June 1941 as the nation was preparing for the war which was soon to include the United States. Two re-designations occurred within 13 months: on 22 February 1942 the unit was reorganized as the 97th Engineer Regiment (General Service) and on 1 Aug 1942 the official designation became the 97th Engineer General Service Regiment. At this time the Regiment had been in Alaska a few months and was beginning to construct the Alaskan portion of the world famous Alcan Highway. From this tough but successful mission, the unit redeployed to New Guinea for the duration of World War II. For these operations in the American Pacific Theater during the war the Regiment earned the Meritorious Unit Streamer. After the war the unit was reorganized as the 97th Engineer General Service Battalion in the Philippine Islands where on 15 March 1948 the unit was inactivated. With the outbreak of a new war in Korea just two years later, the newly designated 97th Engineer Construction Battalion was activated at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, on 1 October 1950. Within a year the Battalion was notified for overseas shipment and on 23 November 1951 arrived in Europe. While serving in France the battalion had its headquarters at Toul, Verdun, and Etain, under first the European Command, Army Engineers and then the Advance Section of the Communication Zone (ADSEC), United States Army Europe (USAREUR). Activities of the 97th Engineers primarily supported the mission of the Theater Army Support Command (TASCOM) in forming a chain of supply posts linking the seaport towns of France with the main element of troops stationed in Germany. After fourteen years of continuous operations in France, the greatest duration for the 97th Engineer Battalion in any single location, official notification was received on 1 March 1966 to relocate under United States Army Europe (USAREUR) to Pirmasens, Germany. While thoroughly engaged in construction projects necessitated by French Location (FRELOC), the main body of the 97th Engineer Battalion (Construction) arrived in Germany in March 1967. On 20 December 1967 the unit received the order to redeploy to Fort Riley, Kansas. When the main body of the 97th Engineer Battalion (Construction) departed in July 1968, it had completed nearly seventeen years of service in the European Theater and was inactivated at Fort Riley, Kansas, on 22 October 1971.





97th Engineers Reunion



Report Part 3



The 97th Engineer Battalion joins other units who have added their history and colors to the Engineer Museum located at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. Those in attendance were justifiably proud to be the remnant who stood and toasted the memory and recorded accomplishments of a steady, hard-working, and decorated group of men grateful for the opportunity to honor their country in service. Our emblematic plaque and newly created battalion colors are a grand addition to the collection of honored units that served, and some continue to serve, in such a necessary field of work on any battlefield. Thankfully, the majority of work actually produced by these units contribute to local and national objective rather than in actual combat; however, those who serve have always been at the forefront of every major battle or campaign to make the way better and easier for the combined arms elements to engage and win the battle.

The purpose of our gathering on Saturday, 4 October 2014, was to dedicate our beautifully created symbol and radiant battalion colors, and to honor those who served and are no longer able to assemble or those who have now passed on. Our memorial service was an opportunity to recognize the importance of those who have served and continue to serve our country, for it is through them that we remain a free country.

The evening's program began with a Posting of the Colors ceremony conducted by a sharp ROTC unit from Missouri University of Science and Technology. BG Michael A. LePeilbet, Ret., Reunion Chairman, later presented a letter of appreciation to the color guard for their exceptional performance of the ceremony. Many thanks to Major Chad Pense, Commandant of the ROTC unit, for their participation.

During the reunion we were honored by the presence of three children of former battalion commanders, Doctor Mitchell D. Achée (son of Colonel Fernand M. Achée, Jr.), Deni Carter (daughter of Colonel Achée), and MSGT (Ret.) Stephen Dupont (son of Colonel Albert A. Dupont). To begin the memorial service, Mitchell and Stephen were asked to come forward to light the memorial table candle, which was followed by an explanation of purpose for each item on the table and a toast to our fallen and deceased. This toast was followed by three other toasts, including one for the ladies. This was our cue to present to each lady present a bag of truffles. We saw many smiling faces as General LePeilbet and I gave one to each lady (yes, our lovely princess, Ellie, received one, too). We took time to take a photo of our lovely ladies, which is the top photo on the next page.

It was also a special moment for the gathering when the former battalion chaplain, Reverend William "Bill" Brander, stood and gave the invocation prayer. Chaplain Brander was a highly-regarded Dutch-Reformed Church minister and chaplain, served in the U. S. Army from 1968 to 1984, and retired as LTC Brander. We love you, Bill and Trudy, and thank you for your service!

We were supposed to move right into an invitation for our hungry crowd to partake of an excellent buffet dinner provided by Vidies Catering of Lebanon, Missouri. However, someone gave the microphone to Mike LePeilbet, which resulted in a longer period of hunger for our attendees and a very red face from Don Ricks, Reunion Coordinator, as he was called back to the podium. A ceremony immediately followed by a call of attention to orders by Colonel David Theisen, Assistant Commandant, U. S. Army Engineer School, who read the following citation:

"The Army Engineer Association on behalf of the Engineer Regiment is proud to award The Steel Order of the de Fleury Medal to CPT (Ret) Donald M. Ricks for inspirational leadership to the United States Army Corps of Engineers, in recognition of superior service to the Engineer Regiment as it supports the Army to assure mobility, enhance protection, enable expeditionary logistics, and build capacity in order to provide commanders with the freedom of action for full spectrum operations in an era of persistent conflict. These efforts have significantly contributed to the overall readiness of the Army and reflect great credit upon the Corps of Engineers." [Signed] Thomas P. Bostick, Lieutenant General, USA, Chief of Engineers."

As the ceremony ended, the dinner began as our dinner guests lead the way to an excellent feast. Everyone seemed pleased with the dessert as well, especially Remy Naccaro praised the engineer theme cake provided by the Farris family. With tears in his eyes, Remy said he was grateful for the photos on the cake, one of which was his deceased father who served as a civilian at Vassincourt Army Camp, France.

Ladies of the 97th EBC Reunion, 2014

4 October 2014



DR



Gentlemen at the head table were: Colonel David Theisen, Guest Speaker; BG Michael LePeilbet, Reunion Chairman; CSM Bulter J. Kendrick, Engr Regiment; CPT Jefferson Kramer, 35th Engr Bn.; Colonel William Downey III, dedicicator of plaque and colors; and Don Ricks (behind the camera).



Memorial Table



Chaplain Brander

General LePeilbet introduced Colonel David T. Theisen, U.S. Army Engineer School Assistant Commandant, and he began by giving an historical overview of the significance of the de Fleury Medal. He mentioned that these medals are prominently displayed in a corner of the Regimental Room. I noticed that two of the men sitting at the head table also wore the de Fleury Medal, Colonel Theisen and CSM Kendrick. I had earlier read the citation for CSM Julius Nutter, Director, Regimental Operations.

After a short but informative guest speaker presentation, Colonel Theisen introduced our own Colonel (Tec5) William Downey II, who insisted that his participation would be as a Tec5 once assigned to the 97th Engineer General Service Battalion. There is more to the story than I have published in the 3rd Quarterly 97th EBC Newsletter: not only did Bill Downey serve in the unit in 1947, but he was team member on the championship basketball team and even the battalion football team.

Colonels Theisen and Downey and BG LePeilbet moved to the center stage area immediately in front of our battalion banner and a display stand holding the 97th EBC plaque that will hang on the wall in the Regimental Room. After a brief dedication statement read by a representative from the Engineer Museum, Colonels Theisen and Downey removed a red engineer, castle-crested flag covering the plaque, to the applause of the audience. I am certain that each person present who had an assignment with the 97th felt a sense of pride because their unit was *now* represented among the many others seen in the beautiful Regimental Room.

BG LePeilbet then presented a commemorative plaque to Colonels Downey and Theisen for their participation in the ceremony and thanked them for being a part of this memorable occasion. They then stood militarily and patiently, each looking sharp in their dress uniform or suit, for the photos you will see in this report. Many attendees began to snap photos with personal cameras so we expect the photo coverage was very good.

Don Ricks then called BG LePeilbet to the podium to present to him a plaque engraved on one side with the Engineer Prayer and on the other side of the plaque is a holder for later mounting his favorite photo of the event.

BG LePeilbet then turned his attention to the presentation and acknowledgement plaque and certificate for outstanding appreciation plaque and certificate to each reunion committee member. There were many honest and sincere accolades attributed to these individuals for being part of a difficult but rewarding hard work and coordination effort to bring about a successful reunion. You will see in the photographs these committee members:

- Lee Burdette
- Larry Castleman (Communications Center)
- Jesse Farris
- Natalia Farris
- Michael LePeilbet (Chairman)
- Lloyd and Jacqueline Mullins
- Donna Colwell (Advisor to Don Ricks, Coordinator)
- Terry Wilkes



Presenting the "Engineer Prayer" to an exceptional leader: BG LePeilbet!



BG LePeilbet presenting a well-deserved Letter of Appreciation to the ROTC Color Guard.

Lee Burdette took the majority of these photographs (LB). He was everywhere, and with a brand new camera more complicated than engineers could imagine. He finally got it figured out, and we are blessed with those he and Fran (below) took that night. Thank you, Lee and Fran!





Reunion 14, Part 3-5

Committee Awards



Reunion Committee: First time all together!

Terry Wilkes receiving an award.

Plaque Committee Chairman, Lloyd Mullins, making a point.



A well-deserved hug!!!!



Engineer Museum, Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, 4 October 2014



Regimental Room



ROTC Color Guard

LB

On the tour bus, Friday



Jim Dyson

Tom Jelen

Ray & Judy Scrimsher



Trudy Brander

THIS CONCLUDES PART 3; however, when sufficient favorite photos come in, I will add them at the end as a collection of "Attendee Favorites." It HAS been fun, a lot of work, but **YOU ARE WORTH IT!**

LB

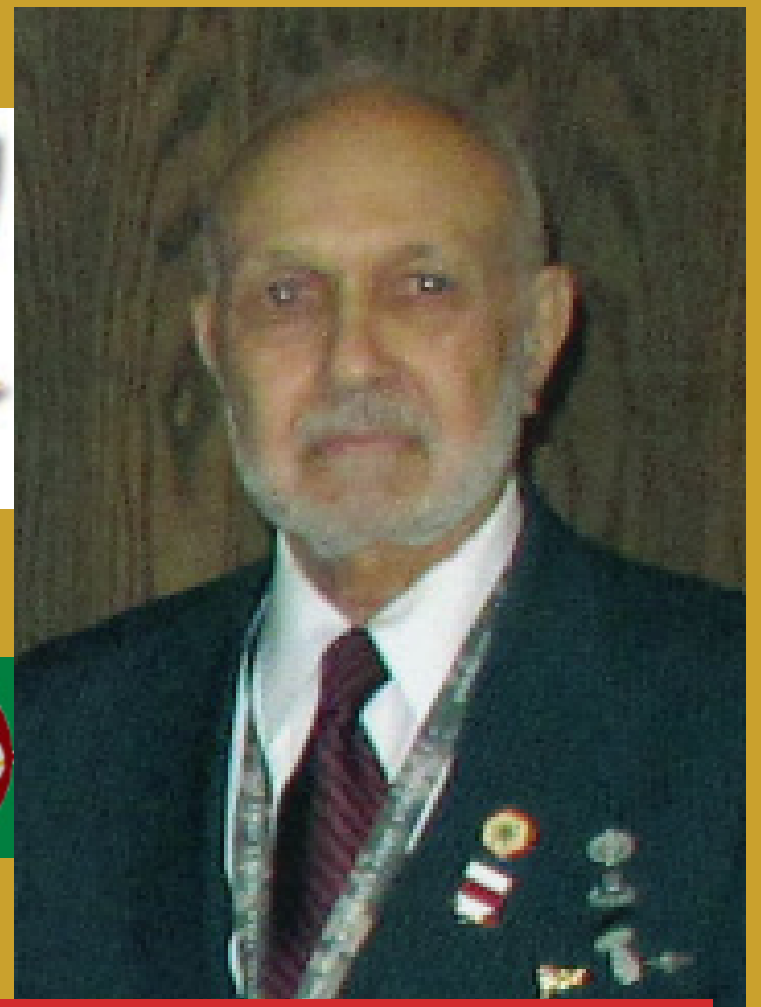


Ladies and gentlemen, this is an impressive veteran in all areas of his life. Colonel William R. Downey II, served in the Philippines as a Tech 5 with the 97th Engineer General Service Battalion. Later, as a First Lieutenant in Korea, he was awarded the **Silver Star** for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action while serving as a Medical Officer with the 223d Infantry Regiment, 40th Infantry Division, in action in the vicinity of the Punch Bowl, Korea on **23 December 1952.**

SOURCE:
<http://projects.militarytimes.com/citations-medals-awards/recipient.php?recipientid=25074>

Served in:

Philippines, Korea, Vietnam



The 97th EBC was honored that Colonel William Downey II helped dedicate the battalion's plaque and colors during the 2014 reunion at Fort Leonard Wood.



LB

Jesse Farris

LB



LB

LB



97th EBC Reunion
 4 October 2014