

Col. Robert A. Atkins Sr., (Colonel, USA Retired)



HEADQUARTERS
97TH ENGINEER BATTALION (CONSTRUCTION)
APO 122 US ARMY

GENERAL ORDERS
NUMBER 18

30 December 1955

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ASSUMPTION OF COMMAND

Under the provisions of paragraph 5, Army Regulations 600-20, the undersigned hereby assumes command of this Battalion.

30 DEC 1955

Robert A. Atkins Sr.
ROBERT A. ATKINS SR.
Major, CE
Commanding

- DISTRIBUTION "A" PLUS:
- 5 - Hq ADESEC USAEUR COM Z ATTN: AG Section
 - 2 - 97th Engr Bn (Cons) Historian
 - 2 - 32d Engr Gp (Cons)

- SPECIAL DISTRIBUTION:
- 4 - TAG Wash 25, DC ATTN: AGAC-1

OBITUARY: June 12, 1924 - June 21, 2014

Robert A. Atkins, Sr., Colonel, United States Army, Retired, died surrounded by his family at Twin Oaks Rehabilitation Center, Lansing, Kansas, on 21 June 2014, nine days after celebrating his

90th birthday and 16 days after his wife's death.

Colonel Atkins was born and raised in Stevens Point, Wisconsin, the oldest son of Horace Compton Atkins and Agnes Joyce Eichinger. He attended the Central State Teachers College Elementary Teacher's Training Normal School and graduated from the P. J. Jacobs High School in Stevens Point in June 1941. Prior to volunteering for service in the United States Army on 2 January 1943 he attended Central State Teachers College in Stevens Point, Wisconsin, for three semesters.

He received his World War II basic training with the 369th Engineer Special Service Regiment at Camp Claiborne, Louisiana. Upon completion of this training he received further training as a demolition specialist. He was subsequently selected to participate in the Army Specialized Training Program and completed a pre-engineering course at Baylor University in Waco, Texas. When the Army curtailed the academic training of engineers, he was enrolled in a medical training curriculum at the State University of Iowa in Iowa City, Iowa, in January 1944. He subsequently requested reassignment to a combat engineer unit, which was granted by the War Department in April 1944. After a short refresher basic training course at Camp Leonard Wood, Missouri, he was selected to attend the Engineer Officer Candidate Course at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, and graduated from that course and was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant on 31 October 1944. On 1 May 1970 he was honored by induction into the United States Army Engineer Officer Candidate School "Hall of Fame" originally established at Fort Belvoir, Virginia but now located at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri.

His first assignment as an officer was with the 1344th Engineer Combat Battalion, San Luis Obispo, California, where he participated in amphibious maneuvers off the California coast and trained infantrymen in the use of combat explosives. When the Battle of the Bulge broke out in Europe in late 1944 he was ordered to the European Theater of Operations as a combat replacement and arrived at the port of LeHavre, France, in early February 1945. He served as a reconnaissance officer and platoon leader in Company "A" of the 125th Armored Engineer Combat Battalion, an organic element of the 14th Armored Division. He returned to the United States in November 1947 with experience as platoon and company commander in various units including the 2nd Battalion, 36th Engineer Regiment, the 138th Engineer Combat Battalion and the 1st Engineer Combat Battalion, 1st Infantry Division. He was a Bailey bridge

construction specialist for the European theater and supervised the construction of the longest high level Bailey bridge in Germany at Straubing on the Danube River, plus other key bridges throughout the American Occupation Zone and the Bremen Enclave.

From November 1947 to May 1950 he served as Platoon Commander, Assistant Operations Officer and Training Officer of the 185th Engineer Combat Battalion at Camp Campbell, Kentucky. He served a four month tour of duty as summer camp instructor in military engineering for third classmen at the United States Military Academy at West Point in 1948 and served with military engineer flood relief teams during the 1948 flood in the Ohio River Valley.

Colonel Atkins was assigned to the Eighth Army Eta Jima School Command in Japan in May 1950 and served as Engineer Supply Officer at that school until the outbreak of the Korean War. He served a short period of time with the 13th Engineer Combat Battalion, 7th Infantry Division, in training at Camp Fugi before being selected for the staff of the X Corps which was planning the Inchon invasion of Korea in Tokyo in August 1950. He was the Engineer Intelligence Officer for the X Corps and participated in the amphibious landing at Inchon, Korea, on 15 September 1950. He assisted in the intelligence planning for the subsequent multiple X Corps amphibious landing operations in northeast Korea. During the X Corps withdrawal operations from the Hamhung-Hungnam beachhead in December 1950, he prepared the barrier plan for the operation and supervised its accomplishment. He conceived and proposed to the Corps Engineer the parachute drop testing of M-2 steel treadway bridging which, when executed by Air Combat Command C-119 cargo aircraft, enabled the 1st Marine Division to extricate itself from the Chosen Reservoir trap. For his accomplishments in North Korea, he was promoted to Captain and awarded the Bronze Star. After the X Corps redeployment to South Korea, he was assigned as Engineer Operations Officer for the corps and participated in five more campaigns in South and North Korea. He was promoted to Major prior to his departure from Korea in February 1952.

Upon his return to the United States in February 1952, he was assigned as Engineer Troop Operations Officer for the 6th United States Army at the Presidio of San Francisco. In May of 1953 he graduated from the Command and Staff Course of the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

In December 1953, he was transferred to Verdun, France, where he served successively as Engineering Officer, 32nd Engineer Construction Group, Battalion Commander of the 998th Engineer Construction Battalion and Battalion Commander of the 97th Engineer Construction Battalion. He was responsible for military construction projects at US Army and NATO Logistical facilities in eastern France.

Upon his return to the United States in December 1956, he served as Staff Engineer with the newly established United States Army Combat Developments Command Experimentation Center at Fort Ord and Hunter Liggett Military Reservation in California, where he participated in the doctrinal, tactical and materiel research and experimentation which led to the introduction of the armed helicopter into the Army and the development of the air assault concept of military operations which were subsequently fielded during the Vietnamese War.

In March 1960, he was reassigned to Orleans, France, and served as Chief, Troop Operations, Engineer Division, US Army Europe Communications Zone, where his duties involved the operational direction and control over engineer troop construction operations for Europe, the prepositioning of engineer supplies in the support of contingency war planning, and the maintenance of the secondary engineer intelligence library for the European Theater. He was promoted to Lt. Colonel during this tour of duty.

In March 1963, he was assigned to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, where he served as Special Projects Officer, Plans and Programs Division, Headquarters US Army Combat Developments Command, Combined Arms Group. His duties included supervision of the operations of the Combined Arms Research Office, a contract operations research activity he helped to plan and establish.

From May 1966 to June 1967, he served a tour of duty as Senior Engineer Advisor, II Corps South Vietnamese Army, with station at Pleiku in the Central Vietnamese Highlands. Upon his promotion to Colonel, he served concurrently as Deputy Senior Advisor to the II Corps Commander.

Upon his return from Vietnam, he was assigned as Chief, Control Office, Arsenal Support Operations Directorate, Redstone Arsenal, Alabama, where he was responsible for the financial management of this industrially funded installation and for the logistical support of the US Army Missile Command and the NASA Marshall Space Flight Center.

In September 1968, he was reassigned to the Korean Military Assistance Group with duties as Senior Engineer Advisor, First Republic of Korea Army at Wonju, Korea.

Colonel Atkins returned to Fort Leavenworth in August 1969 and was assigned as Director of Management, US Army Combat Developments Command Combat Arms Group. He retired on 1 February 1971 at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, upon completion of 28 years of Army service.

Shortly after his retirement from the Army, Colonel Atkins was employed by the Kansas State Department of Corrections to serve in various capacities. He served as a contract consultant for communications and control systems at the State Penitentiary at Lansing and the State Reformatory at Hutchinson. He was appointed Deputy Director for Programs at the State Penitentiary in May 1972. His service at the State Penitentiary continued until December 1981, including over five years as Acting Director or Director of the institution.

During his 28 years of military service, Colonel Atkins earned numerous awards and decorations, including the Legion of Merit with two oak leaf clusters, Bronze Star Medal, the Air Medal with two oak leaf clusters, Army Commendation Medal with four oak leaf clusters, Good Conduct Medal with two clasps, American Theater Medal, European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal with one campaign star, World War II Victory Medal, Army Occupation Medal (Germany), National Defense Service Medal, Korean Service Medal with seven Campaign stars, Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal (Korea), United Nations Service Medal, Army Reserve Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, Vietnam Campaign Medal with two campaign stars, the Korean Presidential Unit Citation, two awards of the United States Presidential Unit Citation and the Vietnamese Technical Service Medal First Class. In February 2001, he was awarded the Korean War Service Medal by the President of South Korea in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Korean War.

Colonel Atkins belonged to numerous organizations, among them the Boy Scouts of America, the Knights of Columbus, the Elks, the American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Reserve Officers Association, the Association of the United States Army, the Military Officer's Association of America, the Society of American Military Engineers, the American Rifle Association, the National Model Railroad Association, the American Correctional Association, the Kansas Correctional Association, the American Association of Retired Persons, the Heritage

Foundation and the Friends of the Leavenworth Library.

He was a member of the Immaculate Conception - St. Joseph Catholic Parish and served the parish for many years as lector, Eucharistic minister and song-leader commentator. He served several terms on the Pastoral Council and was the secretary of the Finance Council. Prior to the consolidation of the Catholic elementary schools, he served as President of the Parent-Teachers Organization at Immaculate Conception Parish, and later as first president of the consolidated Parent Teachers Organization. He served the Regional Church as President of the Regional Pastoral Council, Chairman of the Regional Finance Council and Chairman of the Budget Preparation Committee of the Council. He served on the Catholic Committee on Scouting for the Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas for over 30 years.

Colonel Atkins was an adult Boy Scout volunteer leader from 1968 until the time of his death. He served five years as Cubmaster of Cub Scout Pack 3178, sponsored by Immaculate Conception Church and 19 years as Scoutmaster of Troop 167, sponsored by St. Joseph Church. He served as Assistant District Commissioner for the Leavenworth/Lansing area of the Kaw District from 1989 until 1995 and as a unit commissioner until his death; as Chief Campmaster, Heart of America Council, from 1991 through 1999, and in various other training and service capacities in the former Kaw Council and the Heart of America Council. He was a vigil honor member of the Order of the Arrow (his Delaware Indian name "Nechasin Achpiquan Woapalanne" means "Watchful Whistling Eagle") and an honorary warrior of the Tribe of Micosay, "Tired Gray Eagle", both honorary camping societies of the Boy Scouts of America. For his long service to the Kaw District, he was awarded the District Award of Merit. For his service to Catholic Scouting, he was awarded the Saint George medal by Archbishop Strecker in 1977. In 1994 he was accorded the highest honor that can be bestowed upon a volunteer Scouter at the Council level, the Silver Beaver award for distinguished service to Scouting. He was honored as a Distinguished Commissioner in 1995. In 2011, he was honored by the National Council of the Boy Scouts of America as a James E. West Fellow.

Colonel Atkins married Eunice Ann Kraus on 29 December 1947 at Camp Campbell, Kentucky, now Fort Campbell, Kentucky. She preceded him in death on 5 June 2014. They have eight children; five daughters: Carole Suzanne Atkins (Eddie Wong), of Honolulu, Hawaii; Sister Kathy

Atkins, SCL of Kansas City, Kansas; Debbie Reilly of Leavenworth, Kansas; Sandy Wallace (Kenny) of Lynchburg, Virginia; Nancy Fairchild of Litchfield Park, Arizona; three sons: Robert Atkins, Jr. (Jeana) of Grand Junction, Colorado; Michael Atkins (Mako Shimoda) of Niwot, Colorado; Patrick Atkins (Denise) of Lansing, Kansas. He is survived by 26 grandchildren: Angela Reilly-Harden (Matt); Diane McCutchen (Jason); Missy Konig (Michael); Chris Reilly (Molly); Rebecca Reilly; Daphney Atkins; David Weller; Robert A. Atkins, III and Gwen Atkins; Jenny Bryant (BJ); Lauren Ham (Steven); Jack Bottoms; Stephanie and Brian Wallace; Sydney, Nick and Tyler Atkins; Zach, Tom, Madelyn, Katie, and Marcus Atkins; Cara Leeds (Todd); Amy Branine (Landon); and Jordan and Nathan Fairchild. He is also survived by 10 great-grandchildren: Sam and Leo Harden, Edward McCutchen, Xavien Konig, Kyle Bryant, Andrew and Alexis Ham, Anna and Adam Leeds, and Hali Branine, one brother, Edwin Francis Atkins (Fran) of Oakdale, Connecticut, two sisters-in-law, Faith Atkins and Joan Atkins, and many nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by his wife Eunice, his father and mother Horace Atkins, Sr. and Agnes Eichinger Atkins, his step-mother Dorothy Packard Atkins, his infant brother William, his brothers Horace Jr. and John Atkins, and his son-in-law Jim Reilly.

Mass of Christian Burial will be at 9:30 AM on Monday, 30 June 2014, at Immaculate Conception Catholic Church with Father David McEvoy, O.Carm. and Father Bill McEvoy concelebrating, followed by burial with military honors in Leavenworth National Cemetery. Visitation will be at Belden-Larkin Funeral Home on Sunday, 29 June 2014, from 2:00 PM until 8:00 PM with the rosary prayed at 6:00 PM.

Memorial contributions may be made to Immaculate Conception - St. Joseph Parish or to the Heart of America Council, Boy Scouts of America.

OBITUARY: <http://www.beldenlarkin.com/obituaries/Robert-Atkins-3/-!/Obituary>

MEMORIAL VIDEO: See above web page

Memorial photos:



<http://www.catkillers.org/97thEngr/history-col-robert-atkins.html>

