



TEXAS GENERAL LAND OFFICE
COMMISSIONER DAWN BUCKINGHAM, M.D.

1700 N. Congress Ave. • Austin, TX 78701-1495 • 512-463-5339 • FAX: 512-475-1415

PRESS RELEASE

Voices of Veterans: SFC Johnny McNeil Shares His Story of Service in the U.S. Army


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Contact: Kimberly Hubbard
(512) 936-9582
media@glo.texas.gov

AUSTIN — Today, Texas Land Commissioner and Veterans Land Board (VLB) Chairwoman Dawn Buckingham, M.D., is proud to introduce the next installment of the series highlighting the VLB's Voices of Veterans oral history program. In this episode, we hear the story of SFC Veteran Johnny McNeil of the U.S. Army.

Born and raised in Kingville, South Carolina and played sports throughout his youth, earning a football scholarship to Morris College, a private Baptists historically black college in Sumter, South Carolina. After two years, McNeil left the football team and Morris College altogether.


"I dropped out, I did not finish," McNeil explained. "Instead, I went into the workforce and worked for the railroad."



VOICES OF VETERANS

<small>name</small> McNeil, Johnny		
<small>military branch</small> Army	<small>rank</small> SFC	<small>conflict</small> Vietnam, Cold War, Gulf War
<small>date interviewed</small> 11/04/2020		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <small>interview available on voicesofveterans.org</small>

Johnny McNeil joined the U.S. Army in 1970. He served as a combat medic and a medical NCO and spent time in California, Germany, Panama, and Texas. In 1992 Mr. McNeil retired from the Army as an E-7. He went on to become a security guard for Travis County.



McNeil joined the U.S. Army in 1970 and served as a combat medic and a medical NCO. His time in the military would take him to California, Germany, Panama, and Texas. He said he doesn't remember if he enlisted or was drafted in the service but remembers his parents were proud of the path he chose.

"They were proud of me for going into the military, I was the only son they had that entered the military" McNeill said, adding he was aware of what was happening in Vietnam at the time.

"I knew for sure what was happening at that time, I came in, and while I can't remember if I was drafted, it certainly didn't matter at that time."

McNeil said one of the reasons he became a combat medic in the military is because he was known as a conscientious objector, one who is opposed to serving in the armed forces and/or bearing arms on the grounds of moral or religious principles.

"At that time, if you were a conscientious objector, or c-o, you had to become a combat medic and so that is what I became and they sent me to Fort Sam Houston Texas in San Antonio," McNeil explained. "While there, I took Basic Training and Advanced Individual Training, or A-I-T."



VOICES OF VETERANS

VLB CHAIRWOMAN, DAWN BUCKINGHAM, M.D.

AIT consists of the remainder of the total basic training period and is where recruits train in the specifics of their chosen fields and can last anywhere from four weeks to seven months. Soldiers taking AIT courses are subject to the same duties, strict daily schedule and disciplinary rules as in Basic Combat Training (BCT).

McNeil said while he came in to the military as a conscientious objector and wasn't required by law, at that time, to carry a weapon, as a combat medic he was required to protect patients at all costs.

"When I am in the field, if I'm getting shot at and I have a patient with me, and I am responsible for his life or her life, I needed to protect them with the best of my ability," McNeil explained. "I did tell my authorities that I will carry a weapon to protect my patients, not for myself but for my patients only."

McNeil served 22 years in the U.S. Army and spent time in three different conflicts: Vietnam, the Cold War and the Gulf War and retired from the Army in 1992 as an E-7. He went on to become a security guard for Travis County.

To listen to SFC Johnny McNeil tell his story, click the button below.

[SFC Johnny McNeil's Story](#)

Veterans can email VoicesofVeterans@glo.texas.gov to tell their stories. Please note that the Veteran must be a resident of Texas at the time of their interview.

Voices of Veterans is a state agency's first Veteran oral history program. It records the stories of Texas Veterans through their time in service and after returning home from combat.

The VLB records interviews with veterans over the phone or in person. Their interviews are then permanently archived in the Office of Veterans Records at the GLO, where they join the historical documents of other Texas heroes such as Sam Houston, Davy Crockett, Jim Bowie, and William Barret Travis.

Veterans' interviews are also available to researchers, historians, genealogists, and the public. These precious records inspire future generations and remind us of our Veterans' sacrifices.

To listen to the over 500 archived stories of Veterans documented through the GLO's Voices of Veterans oral history program, click the button below:

[Voices of Veterans](#)