

THE FIRST LIEUTENANT'S NATIONAL GUARD STORY

By John F. Hall

My dad, Charles J. Hall, wanted me to have a career in the military. So, from 1962 to 1965, I served three years on active duty in the 101st Airborne Division. I was a fearless paratrooper. From 1965 to 1968, I was in Control Group (subject to recall to active duty).



On June 29, 1968, I received an Honorable Discharge from the Army. I had no further military obligation to serve this great nation of ours.

On March 3, 1966, Congress passed a new GI Bill. It only paid for my text books, fees, and tuition. I enrolled in the newly opened Hopkinsville Community College (HCC), for the Fall semester of 1966. I transferred to Murray State University (MSU) in 1968. I earned a Bachelor of Science degree in business in 1970. I started graduate school to earn a Masters in Business Administration degree. I had to drop out because the Trigg County Farmers Bank (which no longer exists), wanted me to start repaying my student loans. I accepted the first job, that I was offered, as the manager of the Fort Campbell Rod & Gun Club, in 1971. I received a "Grand Job" pennant award for developing the first RV camping area in Third Army. The Rod 8: Gun Club no longer exists, but the RV camping area is now larger and better, than I could have imagined.

I was working seven days a week, so in 1972, I decided to go into law enforcement, to become a Kentucky State Trooper. I graduated for the Kentucky State Police (KSP) Academy in 1973. In 1975, the KSP allowed me to take night graduate courses at MSU. The Law Enforcement Educational Program (LEEP) paid for my books, fees, and tuition.



I was slowly paying off my undergraduate student loans. I was allowed to give my state police car to MSU. I had to be in my police uniform, and I had to change into civilian clothes, before I went to class. I had to change back, into my police uniform, after class. In 1977, I earned a Masters of Arts in College Teaching (MACT). I decided to try to obtain a Direct Commission as a lieutenant in the Army Reserve. My highest rank, when I was discharged from the Army in 1968, was a Specialist Fourth Class (P). That rank is equal to an Army corporal, who is promotable (eligible for promotion to the rank of sergeant).

I enlisted in the Army Reserve for one year, in a 100th Division Battalion, unit in Hopkinsville. The Executive Officer (X0) in that unit, Major Lindsey Freeman, was a friend. His son, Morgan, and my son, John, were Cub Scouts. My wife, Paula was their Den Mother. Lindsey offered to help me to obtain a Direct Commission. The problem I faced is that I was running out of time. I had to obtain an age waiver, as I was 33 years old. I enlisted for another year in 1978, My quest was coming to an end.'

In 1978, I earned a second graduate degree, a Specialist of College Teaching (SCT). Major Lindsey Freeman told me that he knew the commander of the National Guard (NG) Military Police Battalion, in Louisville, Kentucky. He suggested that I take my application packet, for a Direct Commission, to this commander, and request that he send it to the NG Headquarters in Frankfort, Kentucky. I drove to Louisville and gave my application packet to this commander. He told me that he was trying to get two of his sergeants, Direct Commissions. But he would send my application packet to Frankfort.

To this day, I cannot explain what made me call the office of the Kentucky TAG, Major General Billy G. Wellman. His Secretary, Glen Birdwhistle, answered the phone. I never met this man, but I said: "Glen, I had my application packet sent up there for a Direct Commission." Glen said: "Wait a minute." I could hear him shuffling some application packets. Then he said: "Yes, I have it." I said: "Glen, I don't have a sponsor." I could hear him shuffling through my application packet. Several minutes went by and Glen said: "You do now." I said: "Thank you. Sir." I don't know, what Glen saw in my application packet, that made him become my sponsor. General Wellman approved my application the next day. I was told to appear before a Federal Recognition Board, at the 198th Military Police Battalion, a few weeks after my conversation with Glen Birdwhistle. At the end of my appearance before the Board, the officer in charge of the Board, said to me: "Congratulations Lieutenant Hall." I went from a Corporal to a First Lieutenant.

My first assignment was as a staff officer, in the S-3 (Operations & Training) in the 198th MP Battalion. It was my favorite assignment. The picture, with this story, is the first picture taken of me as an officer. I only served four years in the Kentucky Army National Guard. I was the Company Commander of the 614th National Guard Military Police Company, in Murray, Kentucky, from 1982 to 1984. In 1985, I was in MP Team, 100th Division. I retired 20 years later as a Lt. Colonel. Matthew, Chapter 5, Verse 9, are these words: "Blessed are the peacemakers, because they will be called sons of God." Lee Greenwood wrote the song, "God Bless the USA." These are some of his lyrics: "If tomorrow all things were gone, I worked for all my life and I had to start again, with just my children and my wife. I thank my lucky stars to be living to be living here today. 'Cause the flag still stands for freedom, and they can't take that away. And I'm proud to be an American, where at least I know I'm free. And I won't forget the men who died, who gave that right to me. And I'd gladly stand up next to you, and defend her still. today. 'Cause there ain't no doubt, I love this land. God bless the U.S.A...".

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