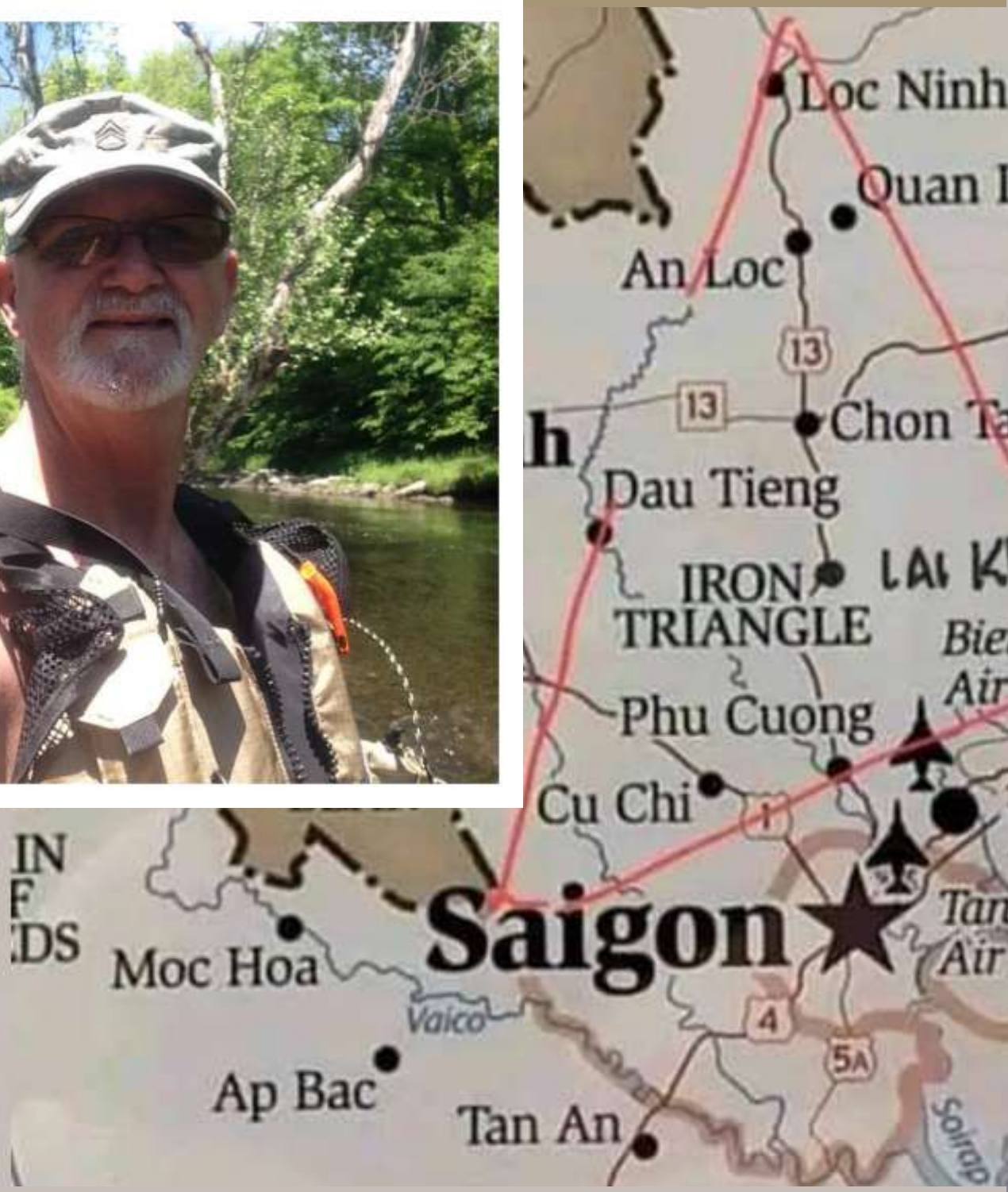
John Acton Mowatt Scrapbook



D-Battery, 5th Battalion, 2nd Artillery (AW)(SP)
D-Battery, 71st Artillery Quad 50 caliber (MG)
1970-71

John Mowatt Scrapbook

This scrapbook is a compilation of my pictures and memories focused on my military experience and U.S. Army service in Vietnam. It preserves my personal story and my Air Defense Artillery heritage in perpetuity on the National Dusters, Quads & Searchlights Association (NDQSA) website https://www.ndqsa.com. My friend on this life journey, Richard Burmood, assisted with collection, assembly, and editing.

The picture content is often supplemented with Facebook conversations, between myself and my fellow veterans. These discussions provide personal interest stories beyond the labeled pictures.

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Basic Training
Fort Dix, New Jersey

I was one of the Vietnam era draftees, obligated for two years service doing whatever and wherever Uncle Sam wanted me. That took me to Fort Dix, New Jersey for basic training, arriving 10 Feb 1970. I remember a lot of shouting - push ups & running that first day gathering up all our clothing and gear.

I remember running wearing those Black Rubber Boots Galoshes with metal clips. It was like running with cinder blocks attached to both feet!!

Right picture is me in Basic trying to look tough. No clip in 16 and scared sh*tless!!

Facebook conversation:

Finger on trigger? Tsk! Tsk!

Reply—safety on and weapon cleared … not my first rodeo .. was shooting guns since 6 years old on the family farm with my four Brothers & Dad

Sleep tight America, John's on guard !!

Reply—LOL with an empty weapon lol GOD what was I thinking …. Well impressing the girl friend who didn't know anything about guns (weapons)

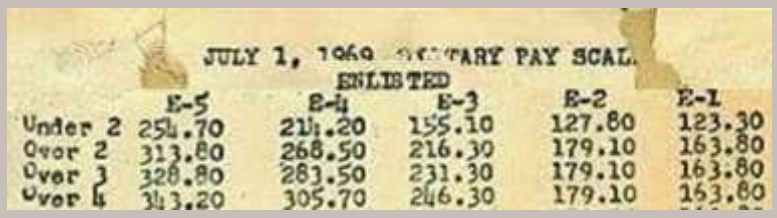
They were impressed and they thought we were nuts. We were. Both.

Reply— well that GF that was with me thru Basic & AIT & NCOCS (not with me with me) once I got to Nam never heard from her again - not even a Dear John letter!! But 10 years after, I got a manila folder in the mail with pictures of me in the Army and a note, "thought U would want these" - that was it … no return address and no signature but it was from Her….

some people just don't know how to say goodbye.

February 10,1970 My first day as a newly drafted Army PVT Ft Dix, NJ

Basic Training in classroom with first M16



JULY 1, 1969 MILITARY PAY SCALE

ENLISTED

	E-5	E-4	E-3	E-2	E-1
Under 2	254.70	211.20	155.10	127.80	123.30
Over 2	313.80	268.50	216.30	179.10	163.80
Over 3	328.80	283.50	231.30	179.10	163.80
Over 4	343.20	305.70	246.30	179.10	163.80

Enlisted Pay Scale 1969

Advanced Individual Training

After Basic Training I was transferred to Fort Bliss, Texas for Advanced Individual Training as a Light Air Defense Artillery Crewmember, Military Occupation Specialty (MOS) 16F.

Service Memories: 10 February 1970 is the day that started the next two years that influenced my life more then any other. This is the day I entered into my two year obligation (plus inactive reserve) with the United States Army. I remain grateful for the opportunity to serve my Country. I also was able to continue my Service years later with DOD Army as a Civilian for another 10 years working in COMSEC traveling to many of the US CONUS & OCONUS Army Bases resetting sensitive communication equipment directly to the War Fighters using them. Loved working with these young troops. Those years were the best and most rewarding of my working career. I was truly Blessed.

AIT camping 1970 Fort Bliss, Texas

Army camping at Fort Bliss Oro Grande Range, Fort Bliss, Texas

Top pic: Just received mail from home during a bivouac training exercise. Be it ever so humble there is no place like home.

That is a fun picture. What a relic of a bygone era. That pup tent is supposed to sleep two since you have both shelter half's, Where's your buddy?

Bottom pic: Bivouac area with tents all lined up, dress right dress.

Reply: I think my other 1/2 shelter mate was Juan Quiñones. I believe he was one of the National Guard troops we had in AIT with us. This I believe was AIT because I don't have my Corcoran jump boots on (NCOCS)

My tent mate Juan Quiñones

Weapons

Advanced Individual Training as a Light Air Defense Artillery Crewmember, Military Occupation Specialty (MOS) 16F. The primary training was in the operation of two Air Defense Systems that dated back to WWII.

Top pic: M42A1 Dusters lined up for air gunnery target practice at McGregor Range, Fort Bliss, Texas.

The Duster is a self-propelled anti-aircraft gun with a crew of six and weighs 49,500 lb fully loaded. Maximum speed is 45 mph with a range of 120 miles. Armament consists of fully automatic twin 40 mm M2A1 Bofors, in an open turret, with a rate of fire of 2×120 rounds per minute (240 rpm). The 40mm guns were clip-fed and fired a four-round clip of either armor piercing or high explosive tracer rounds. A 7.62mm M60 machine gun could be mounted on the front or rear of the turret. The 500 hp, six-cylinder, AOSI-895-5 engine with a gasoline fuel injection system was air cooled and located in the rear of the vehicle. It was driven by a cross-drive, two-speed Allison transmission.

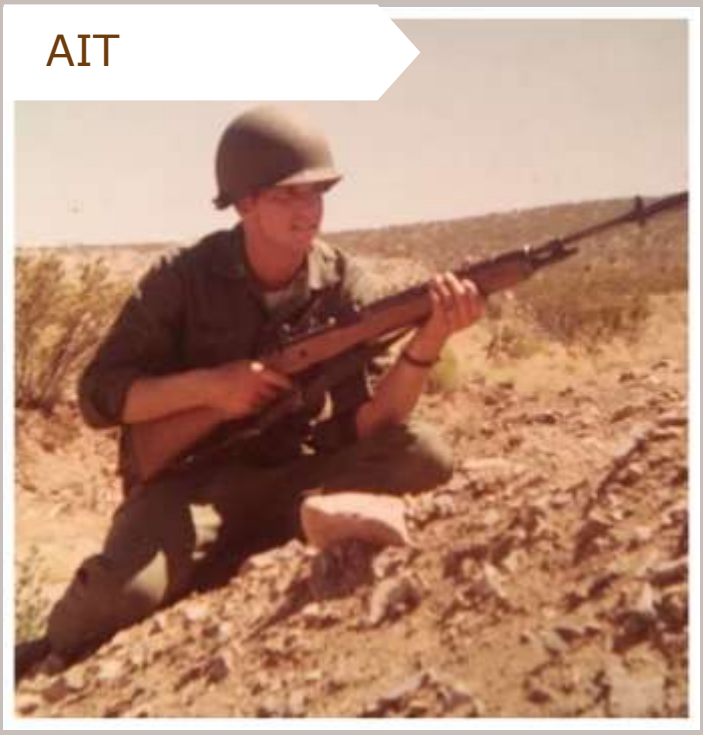
M42A1 Dusters on air gunnery firing line at McGregor Range. (editor credit - David Borlik photo)

Bottom pic: Quad 50 mounted on a 2 1/2 ton truck at the air gunnery Oro Grande Range.

The Quad 50 was mounted on a $2^{1/2}$ or 5 ton truck consisted of a Maxon M45 power turret utilizing four (4) .50 Caliber Browning M2 machine guns. The turret itself was driven by a 12-volt electric motor connected to two variable speed belt-drives. One drive was for elevating the guns, the other for traversing the turret. Power came from a single 12-volt battery. A "Little Joe" gasoline-powered generator, capable of producing 300-watts, charged the batteries, and was mounted at the rear of the turret.

Quad 50 mounted on a $2^{1/2}$ ton truck. editor credit -David Borlik photo)

AIT



John Wayne with my M14. It had a much better range that the M16 but was heavier.

Eating C ration chow sitting in the bed of the Quad's 2½ (deuce and a half) ton truck. Facing the camera is Mike Willard who would later graduate number one in our class, as an E6 Staff Sergeant, at the NCO school.

Below pic left: Any of you guys who did AIT (16F20) remember unpacking 40mm Duster shells from cardboard tubes to put into 4 round clips that we would use to fire at the ranges?

Below pic right: That's me 1970 holding the clip of 4 - 40mm rounds. Black tipped rounds were Armor Piercing. Ft Bliss Texas

40mm loose rounds assembled into 4 round clips for Duster firing

Four round clips ready for range firing.

Noncommissioned Officer Candidate Course

NCOCC Fort Bliss, Texas

Following AIT, I was offered the opportunity to volunteer to attend the Noncommissioned Officer Candidate Course. NCOCC or NCOCS (as it was also know at the time) was 22 weeks of very intense training. We all knew where our next duty station was going to be, and this seemed the best way to be prepared for it. Our training focused on leadership, squad tactics, and maintenance. Our instructors were all Vietnam veterans committed to making sure we were prepared to keep our men alive and accomplish the mission.

Candidate Mowatt

INFORMATION

The United States Army's Noncommissioned Officer Candidate Course (NCOCC), originally located at Fort Benning, Georgia, was created to fill the Army's critical shortage of junior noncommissioned officers with the best qualified and best trained men available. NCO Candidates (NCOC) allowed to attend the course were selected from volunteers and many candidates were among the brightest soldiers of Basic Combat Training, Advanced Individual Training or in a subsequent assignment that demonstrated outstanding leadership potential.

By the early-1960's, the United States Army was again engaged in conflict, now in Vietnam. As the war progressed, the attrition of combat, the 12-month tour limit in Vietnam, separations of senior noncommissioned officers and the 25-month stateside stabilization policy began to take its toll to the point of crisis. Without a call up of the reserve forces, Vietnam became the Regular Army's war, fought by junior leaders. The Army was faced with sending career noncoms back into action sooner or filling the ranks with the most senior PFC or specialist. Field commanders were challenged with understaffed vacancies at base camps, filling various key leadership positions, and providing for replacements. Older and more experienced NCOs, some World War II veterans, were strained by the physical requirements of the methods of jungle fighting. The Army was quickly running out of noncommissioned officers in the combat specialties.

In order to meet these unprecedented requirements for NCO leaders the Army developed a solution called Skilled Development Base (SDB) Program on the proven Officer Candidate Course where an enlisted man could attend basic and advanced training, and if recommended or applied for, filled out an application and attended OCS. The thought by some was that the same could be done for noncoms. If a carefully selected soldier can be given 23 weeks of intensive training that would qualify him to lead a platoon, then others can be trained to lead squads and fire teams in the same amount of time. From this seed, the Noncommissioned Officers Candidate Course (NCOCC) was born.

The NCOCC graduate had a specific role in the Army-they were trained to do one thing in one branch in one place in the world, and that was to be a fire team leader in Vietnam. It was recognized that they were not taught how to teach drill and ceremonies, inspect a barracks, or how to conduct police call. But educating NCOs and potential NCOs was firmly in place for the Army. Its Vietnam experience with NCOCC would be the basis to build it’s current NCO development program and the associated schools for junior, mid-grade, and senior NCO, each focused on the skill sets necessary to be successful as leaders of soldiers.

NCOCC

After Advanced Individual Training at Fort Bliss, I remember that most all of us were destined for Vietnam. In one of our last formations before graduation they asked us if any of us wanted to volunteer for NCOCS. I always heard never volunteer for anything!!

The thought of delaying Vietnam by 22 weeks then a long leave home without having to extend my obligation - well I put my hand up.

I was now staying in Fort Bliss for 22 more weeks. I knew my 8 weeks of Basic & 8 weeks of AIT didn't have me trained up to go off to war!! As I've told my friend Richard, that volunteering for NCOCS & becoming a 16F40 most likely saved my life.

Experiences in NCOCC

Life in NCOCS was a game of mental toughness and personal discipline designed to instill confidence in a young man, replacing years of experience, before becoming an NCO, with 22 weeks of intense training. Part of their strategy was to treat time off as a reward. This was controlled through a demerit system with constantly increasing standards.

Beds were hospital folds so a quarter would bounce off the blanket. Uniforms and underwear had to meet strict display standards.

I had my fatigues tailored and heavy starched. You had to punch open the legs with your fist to put them on. Loose threads were burned with a lighter. I bought jump boots because they could be shined easier and even put liquid black on the soles. Lots of Johnson's Paste Wax and riding the buffer.

Toward the end only 10 demerits got you restricted with no weekend pass. I was standing tall, all spit shined and de-threaded. The first Sgt stood in front of me and he started writing! "Candidate Mowatt, you have an unauthorized pet." I had an ant crawling on my shoulder - man was I pissed off. Well that weekend I went to the NCO Club for beers - while my buddies went to El Paso & Juarez.

I am proud of what we learned about ourselves in NCOCS. Mental fortitude and personal responsibility.

My barracks space about a month before graduation and shipping off to Vietnam. 1970

NCOCC

Wearing the OD green and practicing the NCO lean using the tubes for stability.

NCOCC was focused on both technical and leadership skills taught to us by NCOs with Vietnam experience. For example pulling a the engine and transmission assembly entailed skills normally left to mechanics.

Me in the drivers hatch of our Duster for that day. Nobody has ever explained why we tried to disguise this 25 ton beast with a few clumps of desert grass. Not a skill we ever needed in Vietnam.

Learning to pull the PAC on a Duster.

Duster emplacement training. Hull down behind sandbag burm with the turret exposed

Training on the Quad 50 included both vehicle mounted and ground mounted gunnery as well as extensive operational and maintenance training.

Sling attachment training in loading and unloading the Quad 50 from its 2 1/2 ton truck, or for attaching it to a helicopter to be inserted into a firebase in Vietnam. Usually a maintenance wrecker was use to provide the lift.

The M45 Quadmount had four Browning .50 caliber M2 HB (heavy barrel) machine guns with a single gunner situated behind an lightly armored housing. It had two small wheels that could be attached to help with positioning but were removed for operation. The M2 has been in continuous use since WWI.

Best place to eat a C ration lunch at the range is off the ground. The Quad 50 is underneath its tarp cover.

It was hot and dry in the desert, more suitable for Middle East warfare training than Vietnam.

Training with claymore mines.

In training we had plenty of sandbags to shield the blast and to protect the operator. Not so much in Vietnam. At least it came with printed directions.

One funny memory was training in small arms combat.

There was a mock up out in the middle of that barren desert that they used to simulate a Vietnamese village. The exercise was to attack it and defeat the VC who were hiding there.

We were having a blast running around shooting blanks, and throwing grenade simulators. Somewhere in that confusion our grenade simulators & smoke grenades caught the tumble weeds and scrub brush on fire.

That was End Ex (end of exercise).

We spent the rest of the time beating out the flames with our OD blouses and stamping out the sparks before we destroyed the sage brush and burned down the village. A sight to be seen!

NCOCC

Picture Right: Army lesson #1 is "Yes Drill Sergeant, No Drill Sergeant." Army lesson #2 is never stand when you can sit.

This was ground mount training day. This could easily have been a head space and timing gauge in my hands.

Picture Left: NCOCS candidates gathered around the Quad 50 to get their pictures taken.

L-R Don Dragosh, Larry Vanderlaan, Hector Rodriquez, John Mowatt (center), Mike Willard is in the gunner seat, Lenwood Beyer, and far right Bobby Fussell.

NCOCC

Mike Willard(L) Don Dragosh(R)
These two guys were a big help to me going through NCOCS.

Taking a break on the steps after mess hall chow.

On top of the hotel we stayed at in El Paso.

Time off was precious, whether that was sitting on the steps or banding together and walking across the Paso Del Norte bridge into Juarez, Mexico. Drink the cheap beer, stay with your buddies, and don't offer to buy drinks for the bar girls would keep you out of trouble and get you safely back to the barracks.

Night at the Cave in Juarez, Mexico.
L-R John Mowatt, Grady Cosby, Roger Crary (standing), Jack Clayburn, Jim Criswell, and Gerald Chapman.
Tall man behind me is was not with us.