



Staff Sgt. Shawn Richardson, 6th Air Defense Artillery senior instructor, demonstrates to Vietnam War veteran Rik Groves of Minneapolis, Minn., how Stinger missiles are loaded into the Avenger weapons system. Groves was one of 41 members of the 27th Field Artillery Regiment, which held its regimental reunion at Fort Sill Oct. 14.

27th Field artillery remembers fallen

Story, photo
By Ben Sherman

For Hank Parker of Boise, Idaho, returning to Fort Sill was “coming home.” “I told our guys that we were going to honor the fallen but to do that we had to go ‘back home,’” Parker said. “And they said ‘Where is that?’ and I said to them ‘Fort Sill, Oklahoma.’ And that just struck a chord and everyone said we want to do it. So this is our home.”

Parker was a captain with B Battery, 5th Battalion, 27th Field Artillery in the Vietnam War from 1968 to ‘69. He and his men trained at Fort Sill on the 105 mm towed howitzer. Forty-one members of the 27th FA came ‘home’ for their regimental reunion recently. But they were here for more than just renewing acquaintances and recalling memories.

“The purpose of the reunion is to come together, not just with us and our spouses, but also to invite the family members of our killed in action to come visit with us, so that they can learn about their loved ones, too,” Parker said. Their three battalions lost 48 killed in action during their time in Vietnam.

These veterans came from all over the United States. While they were here they toured the 6th Air Defense Artillery school where they saw the Avenger weapons system. Staff Sgt. Shawn Richardson, C Battery, 6th ADA senior instructor, showed the veterans the training simulators where the crews train on the Avenger vehicle systems and the Stinger shoulder-launched weapons. Many of the veterans were impressed with what they saw.

“The new technology is

phenomenal, Parker said. “In the time it took us to load a howitzer and put out one round, they can put out a battery six in the time it would take us to put out one. Their reaction time has to be instantaneous. The change is phenomenal.”

Retired Col. John Munnelly was also very impressed. “We were ‘slip-stick artillery’ using maps and visual location to the target, whereas this takes advantage of the new generation’s ability to master the electronics that goes with their modern life,” he said. “It’s amazing, absolutely amazing.”

Munnelly commanded the 5-27th FA in Vietnam, 1966 to ‘67. For him and his men, coming back to Fort Sill was an emotional and spiritual experience.

“They come together and share memories that we have together, common memories and our triumphs and losses that we have experienced while we were in combat.”

The memories came flooding back as they looked at photos from the past. Parker reflected on their feelings, “Last night as we were showing slide shows of the various units in combat action, and the bonding that we have, even though we might have been in different battalions, different batteries, never met one another, but 45 years later, it’s as if we were those young kids, skinny, no hair, no shirts – our families thought the Army didn’t have any cloth back then because we never wore our shirts in Vietnam, but it’s a phenomenal bonding that we have that takes place,” he said. “These men will always be our brothers.”

Leave sharing

The Voluntary Leave Transfer Program allows civilian employees to donate annual leave to other civilian employees. Submit completed forms to Denise Scott at the Civilian Personnel Advisory Center, 6608 Fort Sill Blvd., Building 1721. For more information, call CPAC at 442-5726.

The following employees are approved for the program:

Teumalo Tasi, Charmaine Hernandez and LaVita Williams from the **Adjutant General**.

Laurie Sweetser, Regina Benois and Quarneata Green from the **434th Field Artillery Brigade**.

Kathy Carlson, Jean Downs and Luz Otero from the **Dental Activity**.
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