



Eric Osen,  
US Army

# Introduction

This presentation contains an edited collection of Eric Osen's photographs from his service as a veterinary technician in the US Army. Eric served in the Army after graduating from Iowa State University.

Eric's Military Occupational Specialty code may have been 91T, formally designated Animal Care Specialist. He attained the rank of Specialist 5 by the time he received an honorable discharge, equal in pay grade to a Sergeant.

Captions, when placed in quotes, are Eric's own words as written on the backs of some photos. I have added some additional information and anecdotes that Eric related to me in the years I knew him. Dates are also noted if they were recorded on the photograph. Many dates, places, and names are unknown. I am solely responsible for any errors.

It would have been impossible to obtain many of the details in this presentation without the assistance of Tom Watson and David Dreher of the [720<sup>th</sup> Military Police Battalion Reunion Association Vietnam History Project](#).

I hope that this presentation would have pleased Eric, and I also hope that it will have value for his family and friends.

Ian E. Abbott

February 2, 2013

# Walter Reed General Hospital Washington, DC



## Walter Reed General Hospital

After completing basic training, Eric was stationed here, where he served with the veterinarian staff. Due to its proximity to the White House, members of the veterinarian staff at Walter Reed cared for dogs owned by the President of the United States and his family.



## Caring for the President's Dogs

Based on Eric's accounts of this time, this mixed-breed dog may be "Yuki," one of several dogs owned by President Lyndon B. Johnson.



## Caring for the President's Dogs

Eric said that the veterinary staff at Walter Reed cared for the President's dogs both at the White House and at their own facility. Eric assisted with at least one visit to the dogs at the White House.



## Caring for the President's Dogs

This appears to be "Blanco," a white collie also owned by President Johnson. For more information about President Johnson's dogs, click [here](#).



# Vietnam

The US Army employed dogs in a variety of combat and security roles during the war in Vietnam. Although Eric enjoyed his work at Walter Reed, he was not surprised when he received orders to serve in Vietnam.

Eric was assigned to the 18<sup>th</sup> Military Police Brigade. From September 1966 until it was withdrawn and deactivated in 1973, this brigade was responsible for all military police duties not specifically assigned to other US Army divisions or brigades in the Republic of Vietnam (“South Vietnam”).

Within the 18<sup>th</sup> Military Police Brigade, Eric was assigned to the 89<sup>th</sup> Military Police Group, 720<sup>th</sup> Military Police Battalion, 212<sup>th</sup> Military Police Company (Sentry Dog), Soc Trang Detachment.

Eric spent most of his tour of duty in Vietnam at the Soc Trang Army Airfield in the Mekong Delta region south of Saigon.



## Hurry up and wait...

When Eric, his fellow Soldiers and their dogs arrived in Vietnam, they had to wait for three days at the Tan Son Nhut air base outside of Saigon before they began their journey down into the delta. Here, a dog gets some exercise while waiting.



## Loading at Tan Son Nhut

“Tan Son Nhut Air Force Base in Saigon. That’s a C-130 cargo plane and our pallet of dogs & supplies waiting to be loaded onto it.”



## Long Binh

“The kennels at Long Binh.”

Eric spent an unknown amount of time at the 212<sup>th</sup> Military Police Headquarters Detachment at Long Binh before moving on to Soc Trang.



## Long Binh

“Dipping the dogs at Long Binh.”



## Long Binh

“Training area for the dogs at Long Binh. Beyond that is the base perimeter.”

Sand bags, steel drums and other materials were used to construct a training area at Long Binh to keep the dogs in shape. A UH-1 “Huey” helicopter is visible in the distance.



## Long Binh

“The Vet Dispensary at Long Binh – a little more elaborate than the one I now have. That’s one of the other Vet. Techs in the picture.”



## Long Binh

“Waiting for the flight to Soc Trang. The green crate with the holes in it in the upper left is one of the crates we use to ship the dogs in.”



## Soc Trang

“Sign out in front of our building.” (September 1969)

The 212<sup>th</sup> Military Police detachment at Soc Trang Army Airfield was adjacent to the runway; note the US Air Force C-130 “Hercules” transport plane in the distance. Many US Army helicopters and some fixed-wing aircraft were based at the airfield, which was also used by Air Vietnam passenger flights.



## Soc Trang

“Soc Trang. The kennels are on the left and the Orderly Room and Dispensary are in the building to the right.” (September 1969)



## The runway at Soc Trang

“Another C-130. We look for these every morning as they are what bring the mail in- along with lots of other supplies..”

The shuttle bus was used by Air Vietnam.



## Air Vietnam DC-3

“Vietnam’s answer to TWA.” (September 1969)



## **212<sup>th</sup> Military Police Barracks, Soc Trang**

“The Soc Trang Hilton. Home Sweet Home. This is where I live.” (September 1969)

The drums around the building were filled with concrete, and provided some protection against mortar fragments and rifle fire. Viet Cong insurgents attacked the base several times while Eric was stationed there.



**Outside the barracks, Soc Trang**



## 13<sup>th</sup> Aviation Battalion (Combat), Soc Trang

Headquarters building of the primary Army unit based at Soc Trang Army Airfield. The 13<sup>th</sup> Aviation Battalion operated a variety of helicopters and some fixed-wing aircraft.

Click [here](#) for more information about the 13<sup>th</sup> Aviation Battalion.

U.S. GOVERNMENT MOTOR VEHICLE OPERATOR'S IDENTIFICATION CARD					CARD NO.	
NAME OF OPERATOR <b>Osen, Eric G</b>					USA 088-69	
					DATE ISSUED <b>28 AUG 69</b>	
					DATE EXPIRES <b>28 AUG 70</b>	
					SEX <b>M</b>	BIRTH DATE <b>17 Jul 45</b>
BIRTHPLACE <b>Marshall Town, Ia.</b>				SOCIAL SECURITY NO. <b>= =</b>		
The holder of this card is qualified to operate U.S. Government vehicles and/or equipment specified, subject to the restrictions set forth on the reverse of this card.						
SIGNATURE OF ISSUING OFFICIAL <i>Wm E. McNamee</i>				TITLE <i>Cmdr</i>		
NAME AND LOCATION OF ISSUING UNIT <b>HHC 13th Avn Bn APO 96296</b>						
NOT TRANSFERABLE Card must be carried at all times when operating Government vehicles.			SIGNATURE OF OPERATOR (Not valid until signed) <i>Eric G. Osen</i>			

Standard Form 46 (December 1963) USCSC—FPM Chap. 930 46-104-02

## Eric's military driver's permit

The staff of the 13<sup>th</sup> Aviation Battalion verified Eric's ability to operate the M151A1 1/4-ton truck, as the "jeep" was known officially, as well as the M37B1 3/4-ton truck and the M35A1 2-1/2 ton truck.



**Eric in the Dispensary at Soc Trang**

“The ‘Doc’ in his office.”



## In the Dispensary at Soc Trang

Eric drawing a blood sample from one of the sentry dogs.



## **In the Dispensary at Soc Trang**

“Part of my dispensary here at Soc Trang.”



## The kennels at Soc Trang

“Snoopy” (September 1969)



## The kennels at Soc Trang

“Snoopie, Duke & Shyska” (September 1969)



**Eric and the kennels at Soc Trang**



## Sentry dog handlers

“Duke” and his handler” (September 1969)



## Sentry dog handlers

“Prince” and his handler” (September 1969)

More drums filled with concrete also provided some protection for the dogs in their kennels.



**Sentry dog handlers**



## Sentry dog handlers

The olive-drab five-gallon pail was the standard container for GI-issue dog food.

Eric said that on several occasions he traded dog food for supplies that were otherwise unavailable, often with the help of cargo plane crews that carried small dogs as mascots. Eric once asked an aircraft crew to bring him a broom to sweep his dispensary with, and they brought an entire pallet of brooms to him.



## UH-1 "Huey" helicopters returning to Soc Trang

"Choppers returning after spending the day looking for 'Charlie'."  
(September 1969)



## Soc Trang

“Sunset - Vietnam” (September 1969)



## Sentry dog training

Sentry dog handlers and their dogs prepare for training at Soc Trang.



**Sentry dog training**



**Sentry dog training**



**Sentry dog training**



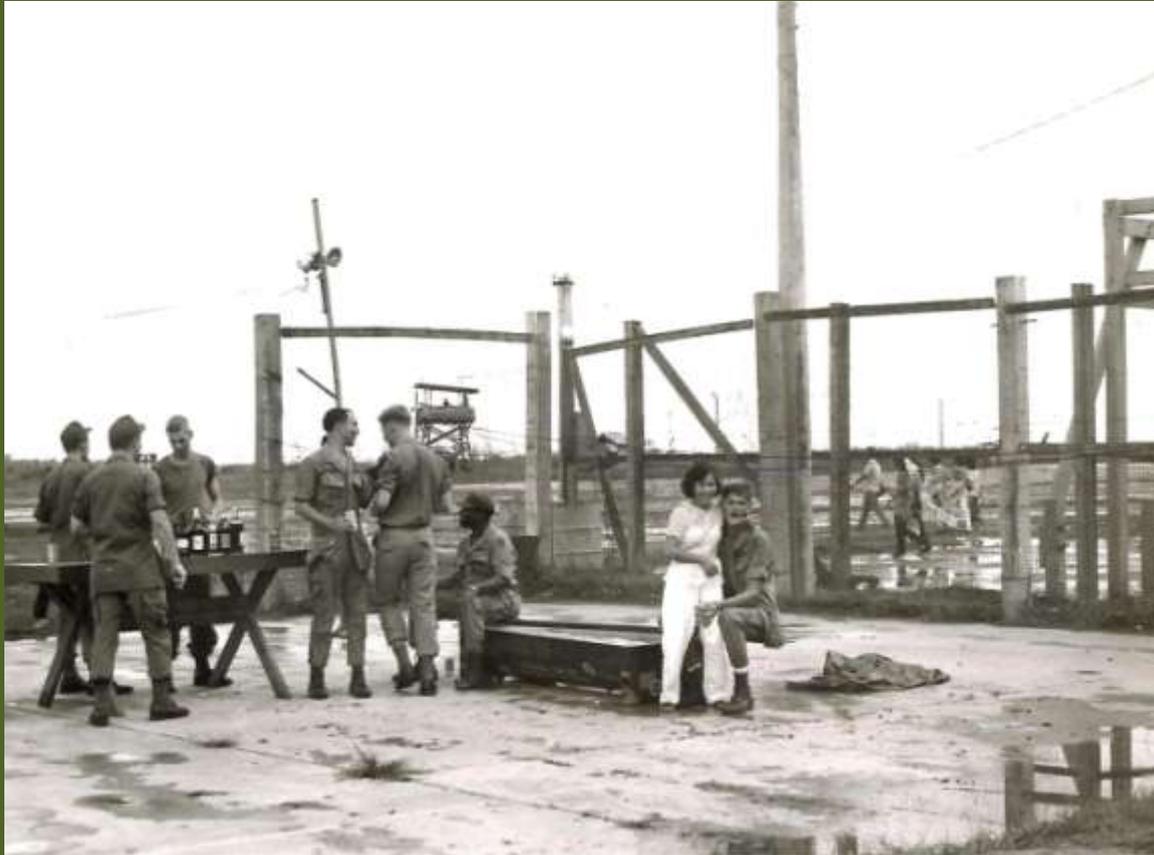
**Sentry dog training**



## Vietnamese Women

“A little ‘Local Color’.” (September 1969)

Dressed as they are, these two women could have been Air Vietnam passengers, but there is no information about them.



## Relaxation

“One of our parties. That is one of the Mama Sanh’s (sic) that works here at the detachment. They wash clothes, polish our boots, etc.”

During their one-year tours of duty in Vietnam, US Soldiers were granted one leave for rest and relaxation (“R&R”). Eric went to Hong Kong for his R&R. There, like so many other servicemen before and since, he bought a custom-tailored suit.



## Military Police On Duty

The 18<sup>th</sup> Military Police Brigade was responsible for all MP duties not specifically assigned to the other divisions and brigades in South Vietnam.

Here, two MPs appear to be ready for a patrol in their M151 jeep, X35. Note the red light and siren on the right front fender. This jeep and the two MPs are from the 188<sup>th</sup> MP Company, 89<sup>th</sup> MP Group, 18<sup>th</sup> MP Brigade, Soc Trang Detachment.



**“Downtown” Soc Trang**



## Evidence of the Viet Cong

In this picture, Eric is posing with an AK-47 rifle and a Viet Cong flag. These items might have been seized by Military Police in the Soc Trang area.

Viet Cong guerillas operated throughout the Mekong Delta region, including Soc Trang and its surrounding area.



## More sentry dog training, Soc Trang

“Jackson is the kid closest to the camera.” (January 1970)



## More sentry dog training, Soc Trang

“Jackson is the one without the shirt.” (January 1970)

There is no further information about the Soldier named Jackson, who must have been a friend of Eric's.



## **Soldiers and dog(s) in an M37 $\frac{3}{4}$ -ton truck**

“Jackson is the guy on the left.” (January 1970)



## A UH-1 “Huey” passes overhead

The Bell UH-1 helicopter was, as much as anything, an icon of the Vietnam War. Its official nickname was the Iroquois; the US Army names its helicopters after Native American tribes. However, since its original designation was HU-1, it acquired the popular nickname “Huey.” The name stuck despite the change in designation to UH-1.

Eric traveled aboard Hueys many times when he was in Vietnam.



**Exercising a sentry dog at Soc Trang**



**Exercising a sentry dog at Soc Trang**



**Exercising a sentry dog at Soc Trang**



**Taking a break...**



## Time out for a picture, Soc Trang

One of Eric's fellow Soldiers, SP4 David Dreher, with his K9 "Smokie."



**Eric with K9 “Storm,”  
Soc Trang**



## Soc Trang Army Airfield

According to Eric, the Soc Trang Army Airfield was constantly busy. This is a US Air Force C-123 "Provider" transport aircraft.



## Soc Trang Army Airfield

In this picture, a UH-1 Huey flies past a parked C-7 “Caribou” transport aircraft.

The C-7 could land on short, rough runways. This made it useful for delivering troops and equipment to remote areas inaccessible to the larger C-123 and C-130 aircraft.



## Soc Trang Army Airfield

Rain clouds appear ominous as a Huey equipped with rocket pods flies past a sentry tower.

Eric said that on a number of occasions, armed helicopters took off quickly to engage Viet Cong guerillas attacking the airfield at Soc Trang, often at night and just outside the airfield perimeter.



## Soc Trang Army Airfield

The CH-47 “Chinook” was a versatile “heavy lifter” in Vietnam, and improved versions are still in service with the US Army today.



## Soc Trang Army Airfield

Here a CH-47 demonstrates its lifting ability by carrying a disabled Huey. The use of larger helicopters to recover disabled smaller helicopters and aircraft was pioneered in Vietnam.



## Third Platoon, 212<sup>th</sup> Military Police Company

Some of Eric's fellow Soldiers in a casual moment.



## Around Soc Trang

Eric had some opportunities to see the land around Soc Trang. Photographed in 1969 or 1970, this building may well have been built when Vietnam was a French colony.



## **Around Soc Trang**

A rice paddy, common throughout the Mekong Delta, stretches into the distance.



## Around Soc Trang

Vietnamese of the delta region often built their houses right on the banks of the rivers.



## Around Soc Trang

In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, age-old designs of boats and houses still served the Vietnamese well.



## Around Soc Trang

Away from the rivers, farmers of the delta region raised chickens, pigs, cattle, etc.



## Around Soc Trang

A Vietnamese farmer waters vegetable crops. Note that his buildings combine traditional reed construction with modern corrugated metal.



## Back at the base

Decades later, Eric enjoyed talking about the dogs he worked with in Vietnam.



## Ready for action...

A healthy, aggressive sentry dog working out in the training area at Soc Trang.

Scout Dog School  
Fort Benning, Georgia

# Fort Benning

During his Army service, Eric was also stationed at Fort Benning, Georgia, which is well known for its role in training airborne troops.

The following pictures show some of the Soldiers and facilities that Eric worked with at Fort Benning, including the Scout Dog School.



## Scout Dog Company, Fort Benning

This sign shows the insignia of the many US Army divisions and commands that sent personnel and dogs to Fort Benning for training.



## Scout Dog School, Fort Benning

This photo shows some of the training grounds for scout dogs and their handlers at Fort Benning.

Notice the mock-up of a helicopter to the right of the picture. This may have been used to familiarize the dogs and their handlers with entering and exiting helicopters.



## Scout Dog School, Fort Benning

Entrance to the training ground at the Scout Dog School.

Unfortunately, there is no information about the man in the picture.



## Scout Dog School, Fort Benning

A portion of the large kennel area at Fort Benning.



## Veterinary Hospital, Fort Benning

The Veterinary Hospital at Fort Benning. The sign above the door reads “Through these doors pass the best cared for dogs in the world.”



## Veterinary Hospital, Fort Benning

Veterinary Ambulance, used to transport sick or injured dogs to the Fort Benning Veterinary Hospital.



## **Veterinary Hospital, Fort Benning**

The operating room inside the Veterinary Hospital at Fort Benning.

# Eric's Insignia and Ribbons



**Far left: Specialist 5 rank insignia**

**Second from left: Medical Corps insignia (mounted on brass disk on left lapel of enlisted dress uniform)**

**Far right: 18<sup>th</sup> Military Police Brigade shoulder sleeve insignia**

**Ribbons, top row, from left:**

**Army Commendation Medal: For meritorious achievement or service**

**Army Good Conduct Medal: For exemplary conduct, efficiency and fidelity during three years of active service**

**Ribbons, bottom row, from left:**

**National Defense Service Medal: Honorable active duty during the period 1961-1974**

**Vietnam Service Medal: Service in Vietnam during the period 1965-1973**

**Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal: Six months service in the Republic of Vietnam between 1965 and 1973**



## **No caption required...**

Many Army bureaucrats considered sentry dogs to be just another kind of equipment.

However, the Soldiers whose lives depended on those dogs and the vet techs who cared for them knew them and respected them as living beings.

Eric G. Osen

1945-2011

In loving memory.