



United States Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School
INSIDE SWCS
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IN THE COMPANY OF EXCELLENCE

By Angela E. Kershner

Decades-old portraits line the walls of Bank Hall, paying homage to those Distinguished Members of the Regiment who have been recognized for their individual contributions to the unparalleled and illustrious history of Special Forces. Current employees at the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School may recognize some of these men who have continued in service to our nation by bringing that level of excellence to the training at SWCS.

One of the most unique elements of the intertwined history of SWCS and the special operations Soldiers who have trained here is the return of so many of those Soldiers to serve as civilians on the school's staff and faculty.

The evolution of SWCS began with the realization that the training and sustainment of specially trained troops was a necessity. Beginning in 1950 as part of the Army General School in Fort Riley, Kan., the school was moved to Fort Bragg in 1952 and became the Psychological Warfare Center.

From its beginnings as the Psychological Warfare Center, SWCS has evolved into an institute of higher learning incorporating Civil Affairs, specialized skills, medical training and the use of cutting edge technology. Undergoing several name changes, the center was re-designated in 1986 as the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School.

SWICK HITS

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For more extensive information on the subject matter of this article, we suggest you take a look at the following sources:

The Distinguished Regiment Hall of Fame located inside Bank Hall.

From OSS to Green Beret
by Col. Aaron Bank (Ret)

U.S. Army Special Warfare: Its Origins
by Col. Alfred H Paddock , Jr.(Ret)

[Essay on MG Robert A. McClure](#)
by Col. Alfred H. Paddock, Jr.
(Ret)

[Special Warfare, Winter 1990](#)

[Special Warfare, AUG 2003](#)

[Special Warfare, NOV 2005](#)

[Modern Warriors Experts With Bow And Arrow](#)
from the *Herald-Journal*

ALLIED RETURN

This month marks the return of allied soldiers to the Special Forces qualification course. We currently have 5 officers and 4 NCOs enrolled shoulder to shoulder with American Soldiers seeking to earn the Green Beret.

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jfkcenterandschool](https://www.facebook.com/jfkcenterandschool)

Korean War veteran Joe Lupyak volunteered for Special Forces becoming one of the first to join the ranks of the 77th SFG. In 1955, Lupyak became the G Chief at the Pisgah National Forest training grounds. Troops undergoing training at the schoolhouse parachuted into Pisgah to receive extensive mountain and unconventional warfare training, participating in the culminating field training exercise called Cherokee Trail, known today as Robin Sage.

By 1960, Vietnam had quickly become a major concern to the United States. Soldiers of the 7th SFG were deployed to Laos and conducted a clandestine operation called “White Star.” Under the command of LTC Arthur “Bull” Simons, the unit trained part of the Royal Lao Army and the Civilian Irregular Defense Group. One of those Soldiers was Ernest Tabata. “We got them out of the barracks and into the mountains and fields where they belonged and started training,” said Tabata.

Over the next few years Tabata trained Green Berets in demolitions with the Special Forces Training Group before returning to Vietnam. In addition to training troops in Okinawa and Korea, Tabata served two more combat tours assigned to the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam – Studies and Observation Group (SOG) conducting extremely dangerous top-secret missions code-named “Shining Brass.”

On the other side of the world, David Clark volunteered for Special Forces in 1966. Clark deployed to Vietnam with the 5th SFG. Lupyak and Clark served in adjacent units and both returned safely. After his tour, SGM Clark was assigned to the Special Forces Training Group’s Specialized Techniques Training Department and eventually became the CSM at the John F. Kennedy Center for Military Assistance.

In 1970, Lupyak was selected to return to Vietnam. On Nov. 21, under the command of COL Simons, 56 Special Forces Soldiers participated in the joint Army/Air Force “Operation Ivory Coast” on the Son Tay prison camp in North Vietnam. The 70 prisoners they were attempting to recover had been moved prior to their arrival, but to this day the “Son Tay Raid” is praised for its execution. “It’s down as one of the 10 best-executed raids in the annals of American history,”

said Lupyak. The success of the joint operation eventually would lead to the creation of the U.S. Special Operations Command.

In 1980, CSM Joe Lupyak, then the command sergeant major of the 5th SFG, decided to retire after 30 years of service. CSM Ernie Tabata retired from 7th SFG the following year with more than 30 years of service. In 1984, CSM David Clark retired after 35 years of service.

In 1983, the center began hiring former SF Soldiers to fill its ranks as civilians. Less than three years into retirement, Lupyak was one of the first hired and is currently the branch chief of the Training Development Division.

“I enjoy this type of life. I’m a firm believer in SF. It’s what I’ve done, it’s a way of life,” said Lupyak on his reason for returning as a civilian. “We can change training all we want, but those guys are still going to be the best in the world – bar none.”

The following year Tabata returned to work, and now serves as an instructor with the 1st Special Warfare Training Group. According to Clark, “Every engineer, every single 18C in SF, has been trained by Ernie.”

Serving in a training capacity for much of his 56 years of service, Tabata sees the results of his work on a continuous basis. “You see these guys being trained, then they start to think for themselves, and then you see them take the leadership.”

Clark, who is still “not quite ready to do nothing,” returned to SWCS as an instructor in 1987. He credits his successes to those Soldiers that he emulated during his career. “Whatever it took, I paid attention. I picked the guy who did the best...dressed the best, could run the fastest, saluted the best, taught class the best.” Clark is now the Plans and Capabilities Specialist and has more than 58 years of combined service.

Throughout the last decade, the next generation of Green Berets has also joined the civilian ranks. Henry Ramirez (CSM-Ret.) was heavily involved in El Salvador and Ecuador during his active duty service. Ramirez returned in 2002, one year after his retirement, and today serves as an instructor supervisor with the 1st Special Warfare Training Group. Ronnie McCan (CSM-Ret.) served 30 years before retiring in 2000 and returning in 2002. McCan currently serves in the

Directorate of Doctrine and Training, where he is the lead training specialist for the Special Forces Qualification Course.

The presence of so many distinguished and extraordinary special operations Soldiers within our historic organization has created a unique heritage that will continue as other Soldiers hang up their boots and join the civilian ranks that work so hard to continue the cycle of training excellence at SWCS.

Those retired Soldiers who serve as civilians well past retirement age share a common desire to serve as long as possible. What keeps them going is the common desire to serve their fellow Soldiers. Ramirez plans to stay until he turns 65. Clark is planning for at least 60 years of combined service. Lupyak doesn't have any intention of going anywhere anytime soon. "When that EMT vehicle pulls up outside, people will say 'Man! Lupyak just retired!'" he joked.

Look for next week's article on how one of SWCS' own took the initiative to help a Soldier in need.