

**Jack Allen Kline** interviewed Oct 27, 2007  
Sergeant, US Army, June 1987 – June 1996

Jack grew up on a dairy farm in western Pennsylvania. He came from a military family and his father, uncle, brother and sister had all been in the military. He didn't want to be tied to the farm and the continual twice-a-day milking schedule so he enlisted in the Army in June, 1987. Jack told the Army recruiter he wanted to see the world.



Basic training took place at Fort Dix, NJ. Because Jack had taken auto mechanics in high school, his recruiter had him enter the Army under CASP (Civilian Acquired Skills Program). This meant that after basic training, he did not have to attend AIT (Advanced Individual Training). Jack's first assignment after basic was to report to Fort Eustis, VA. There, he met the motor Sergeant who, when he found out Jack had not gone to AIT, tried to get Jack sent to AIT. The Sergeant almost succeeded, but Jack went over his head and ended up being assigned to a different area: HHD (Headquarters and Headquarters

Detachment). The new assignment was only two buildings down from his first assignment and when he reported, Motor Sergeant Woods introduced himself and asked about Jack's background. Sgt. Woods said he hadn't trained anyone before, but since Jack knew about repairing civilian vehicles and not military vehicles, he thought Jack would need some training. But then he asked if Jack would be willing to be the PLL and TAMMS clerk (Prescribed Load List and The Army Maintenance Management System). Since the current PLL and TAMMS clerk would be leaving soon, Jack agreed.

In his new position, Jack was in charge of ordering the parts and handling the inventory needed for the HHD motor pool which had between 200 and 300 vehicles. Their main task, in event of war, was to run a TTP (Trailer Transfer Point) which is a staging area between the supplies in the rear and the front lines where loaded trailers are brought before being re-routed to the front. Jack became very proficient at his job, even memorizing the parts numbers so he wouldn't have to look them up on microfiche (they didn't have computers). Jack even ended up helping the mechanics when he had extra time.

At one point, the General, decided they should hold a drill for running a TTP under wartime conditions. This exercise had not been done in a long time, if ever, and it was a good thing the General wanted to test things out. Things were a mess from the start and on the second day, hardly anything got done. Trailers were mis-routed, broken trailers were being sent out and nothing was working smoothly. A Colonel came over to chew people out. When he was done, Jack walked up to him and said "Excuse me, I know what we need to do to fix things." The Colonel was not very eager to listen to him at first, but did hear him out. He then agreed to implement Jack's plan. He told Jack's commander that Jack was in charge, listen to him. Things did get straightened out and the exercise was a success. While Jack's commander was probably not too happy about Jack approaching the Colonel, there was enough praise to go around. Jack ended up receiving an Army Accommodation Medal for his efforts. Part of the citation read "His initiative and willingness to perform physically demanding labor set an example for both his superiors and peers to emulate."

While serving at Eustis, Jack was sent on his first overseas assignment, Bright Star 87 which was a United Nations exercise held in Egypt. Jack was kept extremely busy during his time there and didn't have any time to see the sights. During the exercise, he served as PLL and TAMMS clerk, mechanic, truck driver and wrecker driver. His most vivid memory is of the foul tasting bottled water the Army gave them to drink in place of the local water.

A Remote Base in Germany...

After two years at Eustis, Jack was given orders to report to Germany and in March, 1989, he boarded a C-131 transport plane at Dulles Airport for the trip to Frankfurt, Germany. A C-131 is made for cargo, but had seats that snap into place to turn it into a passenger plane. The ride is cold, loud and shaky. In Frankfurt, nobody had heard of the place he was to report to: Kriegsfeld Army Depot, also known as North Point. Finally, someone was found who knew where it was and they said "Oh, yeah, that's waaaaay down there..." Kriegsfeld was where the 23<sup>rd</sup> Ordinance Company, 191<sup>st</sup> Ordinance Battalion was stationed. When Jack finally made it there, he met the Motor Sergeant who said he was short a PLL and TAMMS clerk and would Jack mind taking the job? Jack agreed and filled the same position he had at Eustis. Here, however, Jack had to make almost daily runs to Kaiserslautern, 50 miles away, to pick up parts. He still had time to help out the mechanics in the motor pool.

Jack lived off base with his wife at the time in the town of Langmeil, about 40 miles from base. Langmeil was located near Sembach Air Base where his wife worked in the base hospital. This was a larger, better equipped base so they would go there for shopping at the PX and to visit friends. This is how Jack got to know people in the Air Force and realized if he had to do it over again, he would choose the Air Force as they gave priority to accommodations and treating their people well.

Jack says that the older Germans, who had been through WWII, all loved Americans. The older ones were grateful because the Allies had defeated Hitler, not Germany. The ones who were a little younger and had been taught by the older ones appreciated the Americans, but the youngest ones who didn't know what had happened in WWII didn't like Americans at all and resented them.

While in Germany, Jack took every opportunity to travel and visited every country in Western Europe. He was able to see the Berlin Wall before and after it fell. When he visited before the Wall came down, he drove with his wife and they had to pass through checkpoint Alpha when leaving West Germany to travel the narrow corridor through East Germany to Berlin. The corridor is about 300 miles long and desolate. At checkpoint Alpha, they were given instructions to keep driving, don't stop, don't talk to anyone. About 200 miles into the trip, Jack's wife had to have a bathroom break. They stopped briefly, but when they got to checkpoint Bravo at the entrance to Berlin, the American guards pulled him into a room and demanded to know why he had stopped. At first, Jack didn't know what they were talking about, but when he explained the purpose of the stop, they let him continue on his way.

Operation Desert Shield...

In the summer of 1990, after Iraq had invaded Kuwait, Operation Desert Shield was begun. As part of the unit overseeing the largest ordinance depot system outside of the United States, Jack's unit was on alert 24/7 and began emptying out their ordinance magazines, putting everything on trains and sending

it to Turkey. Once everything was cleared out and the fighting began, they boarded a train themselves for Turkey. Once there, they set up camp near an established US base. Accommodations were in tents: tents for sleeping, eating and showering. Jack remembers it being hot in the day and cold at night.

Convoys would make daily runs into Iraq from the base and Jack went along on two of these runs. A convoy would consist of about 60 vehicles with an armed Hummer in front and back. Each vehicle would have a driver and an armed guard. Some trucks carried more armed troops. It was while on one of these trips that the convoy Jack was in came under fire. Jack stayed low and fired back while the convoy sped up to get out of the area. Jack says that bullets whistle as they go by.

Each leg of the trip into Iraq would take around 16 hours. On one trip, when Jack went, they unloaded their cargo and turned around and headed back right away. On the other trip, they stayed overnight on a base before driving back to Turkey. Back at their own base, they were forbidden to interact with the local population and limited to where they could go. One memory Jack has is that anything and everything made out of gold was extremely cheap in Turkey. By November, they were back in Germany.

One interesting side note is that Jack's father served in the same company as Elvis Presley at Fort Hood, TX. Jack's Dad didn't like Elvis, and neither did anyone else in the company because Elvis had a staff of military people who would shine his shoes, do his laundry, clean his barracks and take care of him so that he didn't have to do anything himself.

As Jack's enlistment came to an end, a number of people wanted him to re-enlist. Jack would only agree if the Army would make him a veterinarian or assign him to the CIA. The Army did neither, thinking that he was a career soldier whether they gave him what he wanted or not. On his last day, he was shaking hands and saying good bye and a number of people said "You're really leaving?" Jack replied "Of course I am, I told you I would!"

Jack was happy to return home and see his family again. While his parents had visited him once in Europe, he hadn't been back to the US in three years.

Jack cherishes the privilege of serving this great country. The military has some of the finest people and the camaraderie in the military is something you won't experience anywhere else.