

Reminiscences

320th Training Regiment, 1991-97

Col. Richard Littleton and Lt. Col. Andrew Myers

According to Col. Richard Littleton (ret.):

I was the commander of the 2nd Battalion, 318th Training regiment, 2nd Brigade, 80th Division (2/318/2/80) from June 1994 until June of 1995. During the summer of 1995 a major reorganization of the 80th occurred, and we picked up a number of additional units to include a number of the USAR schools that we reorganized as training brigades.

I do not know the history of the 2/320 prior to the summer of 1995. I remember LTC Wooten was the commander I replaced and that the unit mission was changed from Infantry One-Station Unit Training/Basic Combat Training (OSUT/BCT) to Chemical OSUT and assigned to support operations at the then Chemical School at FT. McClelland, Ala. The training center in Beaver, WVa was completed in the winter of 1995. The 2/320 was in the center by the summer of 1995 as well as a USAR M.P. company that was in a temporary center leased in Beckley, WVa. I assume that the 2/320 was located there as well.

2/318 was kept in place as a battalion from the summer of 1995 until 1996 in the Dublin center. Due to recruitment problems it was decided that the 2/320 would have three companies in Beaver and two companies in Dublin. The 2/318 was officially retired at this time (after AT in 1996). This also took care of the recruiting/manning problem (as 2/320 was drastically understrength as well as the 2/318). The two-week Annual Training (AT) for 95, 96, and 97 was spent at Fort McClelland, AL, supporting the

Chemical School and the Chemical OSUT battalions located there. In early 1997 the Army decided to close the Chemical School at McClelland and move it to a new facility at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri.

I moved on to G-3 staff at HQ 80th Division in the fall of 1997. I don't remember who took over the 2/320 when I left, but they continued to support Chemical School operations at Fort McClelland while the new facility was built at Fort Leonard Wood. I think the transition occurred in 1998 or 1999. I returned to the 2nd Bde as commander in 1999. The 2/320 was still a split location unit in Dublin and in Beaver. They began to support Chemical OSUT operations at Fort McClelland. Until I left to become 80th Chief of Staff in 2002. I was mandatorily retired in 2004.

Lt. Col. Wooten was a popular commander. However, I think that 2/320 operated rather independently and I am sure they had some good officers and Senior Drill Instructors. I found that to be true when I took command in 1995. The problem with the unit was the inability to meet strength requirements especially at AT time. In many instances we were forced to levy additional Drill Sergeants from sister battalions in the 2nd Bde to meet manning requirements for AT by Fort McClelland. Hence the blended battalion using locations at Dublin and Beaver. This allowed the 2/320 to do its Chemical OSUT mission both at Forts McClelland and Leonard Wood at close to 100% strength; that plus no soldiers were lost from the New River Valley Area since they could drill at the Dublin Center and not have to travel to Beaver, WV.

The change in mission from Infantry OSUT/BCT to Chemical OSUT was very difficult and required a change in

MOS of all unit members both Officer and NCO: 54B for enlisted and 74A for officers. It was excruciatingly difficult to recruit soldiers for the Chemical OSUT mission. More so than for the INF OSUT/BCT mission. As brigade commander, I had to relieve a battalion commander for problems of this nature (as well as a number of leadership and disciplinary problems). I was able to appoint LTC John Aulbach as commander (he had been my battalion XO in 1994-1997) in 2000. Things improved almost immediately. Lt. Col. Aulbach went to Iraq with the 80th Div. and did a good job as commander of this unit for COL Linkenhoker who took over for me as brigade commander in 2002.

According to LTC Andrew Myers (ret.):

I was a company commander in 2/320 from 1991 until 1995. 2/320 was located in Beaver, WV until the spring of 1995. We did our monthly training about ten miles away at an old vehicle repair shop in Beckley. The battalion was relatively new when I transitioned out of the Regular Army in 1991. The battalion's mission was to conduct Initial Entry Training (also known as Basic Training). We went to Fort Jackson, SC, for annual training on three occasions while I was there. The transition to the Chemical OSUT mission did not start until after I transferred to the 108th Division in 1995.

Early 1995 is also when the Reserve Center at Beaver, WV, was completed. 2/320 was never identified with Beaver until that point in time, as letterhead and addresses all said Beckley. The battalion was just moving in when I left.

The 2/320th of the early 1990s was one of the best battalions I served with in the Army Reserve. I am not certain when it was first activated in Beckley, but it was relatively new when I arrived. The drill sergeants were young and physically fit. Almost all of the ones in my company could run with the fastest groups of trainees at Fort Jackson. (One of them was a forty-two-year-old physical education teacher who could do two miles in twelve minutes.) Many of the drill sergeants were Desert Storm veterans. Some of them were college students. Because of the economic downturn during the early 1990s, many of the drill sergeants left the Reserve to go into the Regular Army.

The senior NCOs brought a lot of outside education and experience to their job. The sergeant major worked for the highway department in Bristol, Va. One of the first sergeants had been a warrant officer in the active army. Another worked for the VA in Lexington, Va. Still another was a high school principal. Their leadership style was more common-sense and less authoritarian than the Regular Army, and it worked.

My fellow company commanders were competent and dedicated. Joe Burkett worked for the Pentagon and drove all the way to Beckley from his home in Alexandria. He served with the 1st Cavalry Division during the initial invasion of Iraq in 2003. W.C. Fowlkes was a bank manager from Martinsville. He served with a military transition team in Ramadi during 2006-2007 and participated in the battle for which Michael Monsoor was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor. Todd Kurtzalls (not certain of spelling) was a Fairfax police officer. He had nearly finished a year at a training base in Kuwait when I

encountered him there in 2006. I drove to Beckley from Charlottesville, where I was working on my doctorate in history at UVa. (I ended up working for six months without pay because my file took that long to go from Alexandria to St. Louis.) I was mobilized out of the 108th Division and led a MiTT in Al Ba'aj during 2006-2007.

Our battalion commander was a West Virginia state senator named William Wooton. He still has a law practice in Beckley. Because of his political connections, we were able to accomplish some really great training. We used the local police range for marksmanship training and did road marches, common task training, and field exercises at the 4-H camp and state park near Beaver. On one occasion, we trained an ARCOM headquarters at Camp Dawson.

I left the 80th Division in 1995 because I moved to South Carolina to work on my dissertation about Fort Jackson, which was published as the book *Black, White & Olive Drab: Racial Integration at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, and the Civil Rights Movement* (2006). I have fond memories of my time with 2/320th and the 80th Division.