

Extracted and transcribed from The Fort Riley Post newspapers, with dates published as shown, by MAJ (Ret.) Larry L. Castleman, 97th EBC, France, 1958.
30 April 2014

RETIREMENT – 12 July 1968

SSG Roger D. Crowson, 97th Engr Bn.

97TH ENGR BN TO MARK 35TH YEAR – 4 OCT 1968

On Oct 1, the 24th Inf Div will celebrate its 27th Anniversary. However, it shares this date with another non-divisional unit also stationed at Ft Riley – the 97th Engineer Battalion (Construction). The following is the history of this unit.

The 97th Engineers became part of the regular Army on Oct 1, 1933, as the 56th Engr Bn (Separate). Four years later, on Jan 1 the unit was redesignated the 97th Engr Bn (Separate).

Seven months before the United States was to enter World War II, the battalion was activated for full military service at Camp Blanding, FL. In the following 13 months, the 97th was redesignated the 97th Engineer Regiment (General Service), then the 97th Engineer General Service Regiment.

During this time the regiment was stationed in Alaska and had begun the construction of the northern section of the famous Alcan Highway. Despite adverse conditions and great hardship, the engineers completed their first mission on schedule.

No sooner had the 97th returned to the States than they began undergoing intensive training. Four months later found them rolling ashore on New Guinea. They remained there, constructing roads, airfields and camp facilities until the war was over.

The regiment was then reorganized as the 97th Engineer General Service Battalion in the Philippines, and then deactivated in 1948.

When the war broke out in Korea two years later, the newly designated 97th Engineer Construction Battalion was activated at Ft Leonard Wood, MO, on Oct 1. Within a year the new battalion was again on the move, this time to Europe.

The 97th arrived in France and set up headquarters at Toul and Verdun. It served first under the European Command, Army Engineers, then the Advance Section (ADSEC), of the Communication Zone (COMZ), United States Army Europe (USAREUR). The 97th's mission was that of support to the Theater Army Support Command (TASCOM), in setting up a chain of supply depots linking the seaport towns of France with the main group of troops stationed in Germany.

March 1, 1966, terminated 14 years of service in France, the longest amount of time spent in one place for the 97th. The unit was relocated under USAREUR to Pirmasens, Germany, by March 1967, after spending a hectic year engaged in various projects necessitated by the French Relocation (FRELOC) program. Later that year, in December, the 97th received orders to redeploy to Ft Riley. When the main body departed Germany in July of this year, it had completed almost 17 years of service in the European Theater.

The 97th Engr Bn (Const) now enters its 36th year of service to the Army and to the United States, after proving time and again its motto: "No Task Too Great."

NEW ASSIGNMENTS – 31 Oct 1969

2nd LT Paul W. Counts, personnel officer, HQ Co, 97th Engr Bn, from Ft Belvoir, VA.

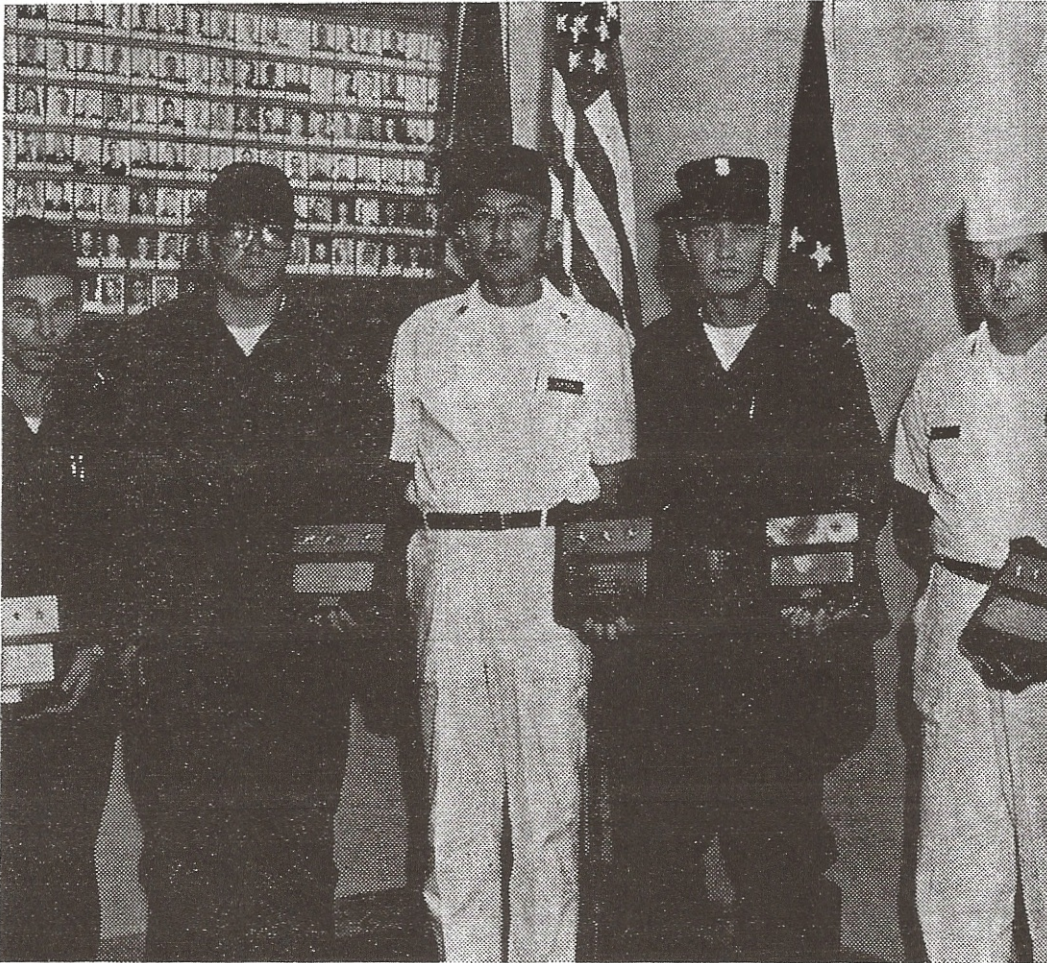
ENGINEERS GARNER BEST MESS AWARD – 31 Oct 1969

The best three ways to build morale is good food and two men to serve it. If so, the 97th Engr Bn has the best morale on post. For the second quarter in a row their mess halls received Gold Star Awards for their excellent cuisine.

The 97th Engineers received three of the Four Star Awards given out by post for non-divisional units. Only eight are given each quarter. Receiving the Four Star Awards were SFC Richard A. Allen of Hq Co, SSG Elroy Kinzler of C Co and SP5 Michael G. Christain of Co A.

Receiving Three Star Awards were SSG Rodrigues J. Rivera of Co D and SP6 Woodrow Rabey of Co B.

The awards were given for general cleanliness of the mess hall as well as the excellence of the food.



GOOD EATS-97th Engr Bn Mess Stewards exhibit Gold Star Mess Awards presented to them for the second consecutive quarter. The are, (L to R) SSG Elroy Kinzler, SP5 Michael G. Christian, SSG Rodrigues H. Rivera, SP6 Woodrow Rabey and SFC Richard A. Allen.

AWARDS AND DECORATIONS – 28 Nov 1969

BRONZE STAR MEDAL: SSG Cossie O. Holmes, Co A, 97th Engr Bn, for meritorious service in the Republic of Vietnam.

ARMY COMMENDATION MEDAL: SP4 Dewey W. Dover, Co A, 97th Engr Bn, for service in the Republic of Vietnam.

RECENTLY ASSIGNED – 28 Nov 1969

2nd LT Thomas C. Gorman, operations officer, Co B, 97th Engr Bn from Ft Leonard Wood, MO.

SP5 Larry L. Birdsell, chief draftsman, HHC, 97th Engr Bn from Ft Belvoir, VA.

SSG Billy Steed, operations NCO, HHC, 97TH Engr Bn from Germany.

SP5 Robert U. Andrews, crane operator, Co A, 97th Engr Bn from Vietnam.

RECENTLY ASSIGNED – 5 Feb 1970

1SG Albert F. Burghardt, first sergeant, Co A, 97th Engr Bn from Vietnam.

SSG Horst Loleit, utility foreman, H&H Co, 97th Engr Bn from Vietnam.

SP5 Cecilio Longoria, Jr., truck driver, Co A, 97th Engr Bn from Vietnam.

AWARDS AND DECORATIONS – 5 Feb 1970

BRONZE STAR MEDAL: SSG Horst Loleit, H&H Co, 97th Engr Bn, for outstanding meritorious service in Vietnam.

BRONZE STAR MEDAL: SP4 David J. Braden, Co A, 97th Engr Bn, for meritorious service in Vietnam.

BRONZE STAR MEDAL: SP4 Roger S. Weaver, Co D, 97th Engr Bn, for outstanding meritorious service while assigned to the 597th Transportation Unit in Vietnam.

AIR MEDAL: SP4 Michael D. Bramel, Co D, 97th Engr Bn, Eight Oak Leaf Clusters, for meritorious service.

ARMY COMMENDATION MEDAL: SFC James R. Davenport, Co D, 97th Engr Bn, for meritorious service.

ARMY COMMENDATION MEDAL: SSG Samuel P. Mullins, H&H Co, 97th Engr Bn for meritorious service in Vietnam.

ARMY COMMENDATION MEDAL: SGT Carl D. Krantz, 97th Engr Bn, for meritorious service with the 864th Engr Bn, in Vietnam.

ARMY COMMENDATION MEDAL: SP5 Refford Eddy, 97th Engr Bn, for meritorious service with the 29th Evacuation Hosp in Vietnam.

ARMY COMMENDATION MEDAL: SP5 Dewey D. Polf, heavy equipment operator, Co B, 97th Engr Bn, for meritorious service in Vietnam.

ARMY COMMENDATION MEDAL: SP4 David L. Marcum, 97th Engr Bn, for meritorious service with the 15th Engr Gp in Vietnam.

ARMY COMMENDATION MEDAL: SP4 Benny Montano, Co A, 97th Engr Bn, First Oak Leaf Cluster, for meritorious service.

RECENTLY PROMOTED – 5 Feb 1970

TO SSG – Pedro C. Alverio, squad leader, Co A, 97th Engr Bn.

TO SP5 – Hubert Newby, Jr., mechanic, Co A, 97th Engr Bn.

NEW ASSIGNMENTS – 20 March 1970

SGT Bruce A. Qualls, COMMO, HHC, 97th Engr Bn, from Vietnam.

SP5 Ramon J. Roman, equipment platoon, Co A, 97th Engr Bn, from Vietnam.

SP5 David T. Lewis, Jr., scoop loader operator, Co A, 97th Engr Bn, from Vietnam.

SP5 Robert J. Borgheiinck, crane operator, Co A, 97th Engr Bn, from Ft Leonard Wood, MO.

SP5 Louis P. Defelix, medical specialist, HHC, 97TH Engr Bn, from Vietnam.

RE-ENLISTMENTS – 3 April 1970

FOR FOUR YEARS

SP4 Douglas H. Clapp, Co B, 97th Engr Bn.

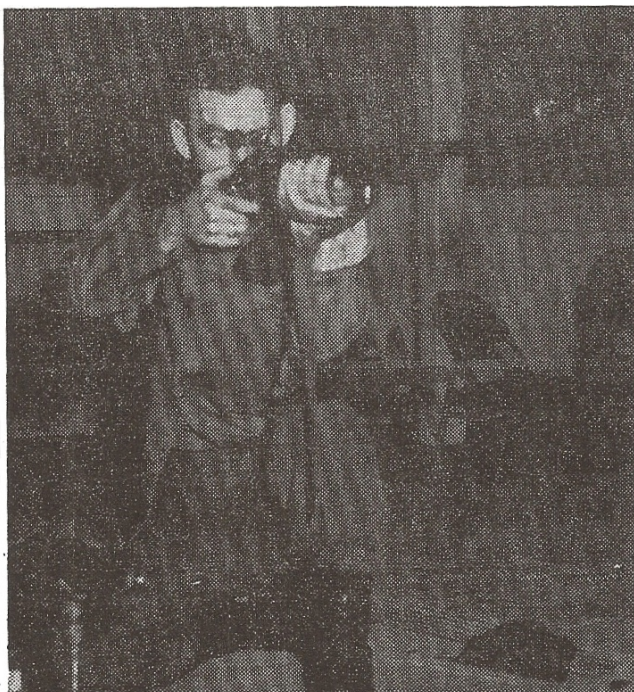
SP5 Dennis Foster, Co D, 97th Engr Bn.

FOR THREE YEARS

SP4 Chester Fisher, Co C, 97th Engr Bn.

SP4 Alex S. McClain, Co A, 97th Engr Bn.

SSG Gary Reed, Co A, 97th Engr Bn.



FIFTH ARMY SMALLBORE MATCHES – 29 Jan 1971

TAKE AIM – SP5 Erwin Medley, Co A, 97th Engr Bn, Ft Riley, practices for the Fifth Army Small-bore Matches.
(U.S. Army Photo)

97TH ENGINEERS BUSY – 18 June 1971

The 97th Engr Bn at Ft Riley has been actively engaged in many projects.

Co A has the continuing responsibility of supplying Ft Riley with rock, which has been utilized in many areas around post: sub-draining systems for ROTC Summer Camp, and the up-grading of existing roads and tank trails.

Co B, on the other hand, has been busy constructing an obstacle course for ROTC Summer Camp.

The course consists of 30 obstacles, 3,800 feet long. This provides cadets with a stiff challenge during their training.

Co C has constructed the water-training portion of ROTC Summer Camp at Breakneck Lake as well as the hand-to-hand combat pit. Included in the water training is a slide for life, a rope drop, and three rope bridges. The slide for life platform is supported by two 90-foot telephone poles. The platform was prefabricated on the ground as a metal ladder and cage.

The entire assembly was lifted into place by a CH-54 Flying Crane provided by the Kansas National Guard in Topeka, KS. The rope drop consists of a 35-foot high platform with a cable suspended 40 feet above Breakneck Lake. The object is to advance hand over hand until an instructor directs the man to drop into the water. The rope bridge portion teaches the cadets how to string ropes on a bridge support and then cross with a squad.

Co C also restored the earth dam at Breakneck Lake and installed an underground water seepage drainage system as well as a new spillway. By restoring the present dam, the water level at the lake can be raised two and a half feet.

Companies B and C constructed tent frames for the ROTC Summer Camp. Co B constructed 34 general purpose medium tent frames plus six shower points while Co C constructed 18 general purpose tent frames.

Co D, 97th Engr Bn constructed the mountaineering course for ROTC Summer Camp. This consists of two 30-foot rope climbs, two rope corrals, and a 30-foot rappelling tower. The tower has rappelling platforms at 30 and 50-foot levels. The CH-54 Sky Crane provided by the Kansas National Guard from Topeka also set the poles for this tower.

In addition to these projects, Co D also constructed a half-mile gravel road to a recreational area at Milford Lake for ROTC Summer Camp.

FT RILEY PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST WINNERS NAMED – 16 July 1971

The Color action award went to PFC Karlludie Young of the 97th Engr Bn for his picture title “The Fourth of July.” PFC Young also won the still life category with his photograph “The Coming Light.”

The color animal category award went to SP5 William Carson, 97th Engr Bn. SP5 Carson’s “Pelican” won first place.

97TH ENGINEERS...IN WAR AND PEACE – Date unknown

The 97th Engr Bn (Const) Ft Riley began a five day Field Training Exercise last week. During the exercise the battalion continued to work on the various projects at Ft Riley while the base camp was put under simulated combat conditions.

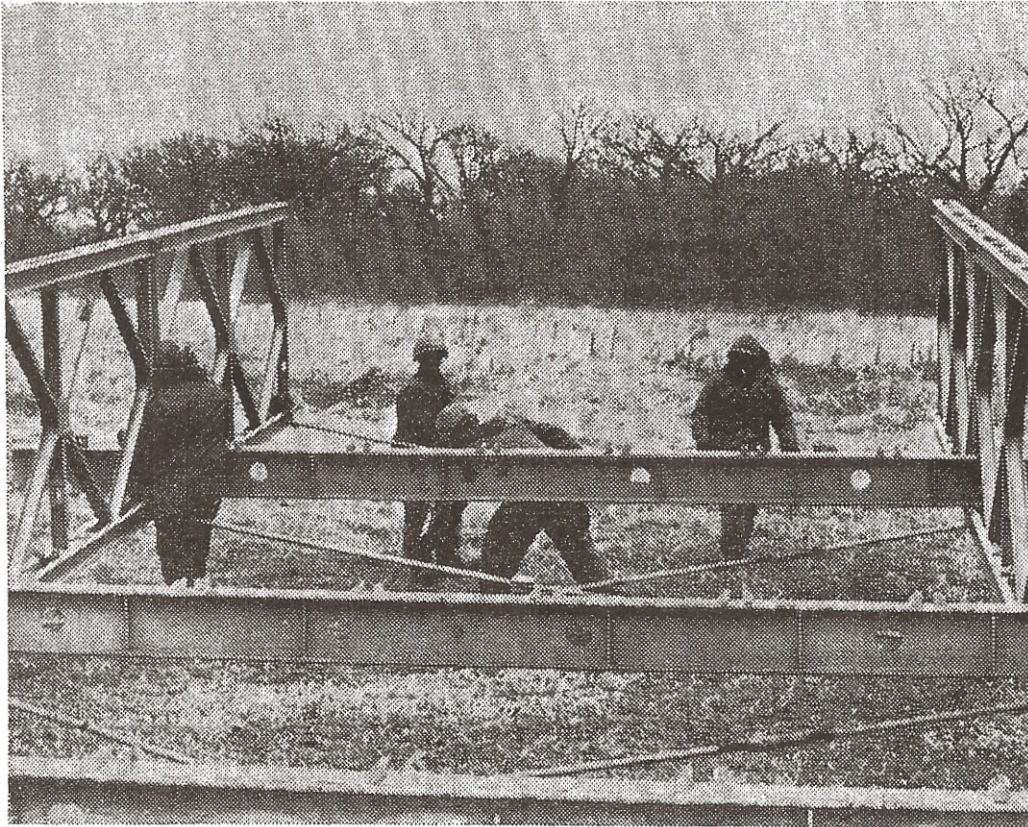
According to LTC Thomas E. Gioiosa, commanding officer of the 97th Engr Bn, the battalion took on the additional job of improving and protecting the tank trails while continuing their construction on post.

“We constructed a prefabricated bridge on Tank Trail ‘Green’,” said LTC Gioiosa, “and built several tank by-passes on Tank Trail ‘Red’.” The bridge was removed during the final day of training.

The bridge, which was almost 60 feet long, was brought in sections to the site and then assembled. Under clear weather conditions it can be put together in only one day. While the bridge was not actually used by heavy equipment during the FTX, it is capable of sustaining all vehicles used in the operation.

The 97th Engineers are responsible for the construction and maintenance of the tank trails and have built almost 27 miles of the roadway at Ft Riley. The trails serve as easy access routes for tanks and heavy equipment to and from various training areas.

Continuing projects at the post include a new viewing stand at the buffalo corral; a new floor of cells at the post stockade; and a complete drainage system for the Ft Riley Rod and Gun Club dog kennels. Prefabricated shelters are also being built on Custer Hill for equipment storage.



TRAINING BRIDGE-A prefabricated steel bridge is set up by Co C, 97th Engr Bn, for use during training. The 60-foot long bridge spanned a gulch that was passable only in dry weather. Facing the camera is (L to R), PFC George Mackey and SP4 Art Farckle.



BUFFALO'S NEXT STAND-Members of Co B, rebuild the viewing stand at the Buffalo Corral as a need for a more permanent one developed. This was part of the unit's latest Field Training Exercise under simulated combat conditions. CPT Walter Ferguson (center) discusses plans with the operation's NCOIC, SFC Benito Munoz.



BEAM FOR FTX-SP4 Earnest Hurt, PVT Terry Lee, and SP4 Charles Tacket carry a beam for the heavy-duty prefabricated bridge.



PRE-FAB SHELTER-A Foundation is being poured for a prefabricated shelter on Custer Hill during FTX. The 15' by 24' shelter will be used for storage. Facing the camera is PFC William Delgado.



KENNEL PROJECT-Working on the Rod and Gun Club's dog kennel are men from Co D. (L to R) SP4 William A. Stewart, PFC Paul Mulve, and PFC John Stratton are working on a new sanitation system for the kennels.



REFURBISHES CORRAL-Exhibiting his masonry skills is PVT John Kisal, a native of Scranton, PA. He is repairing the fence, which surrounds the Post's Buffalo Corral, as the engineers complete the viewing stand.

RECENT ASSIGNMENTS – date unknown

WO David J. Dean, pipeline engineer, HHC, 97th Engr Bn.

RECENTLY PROMOTED – date unknown

TO 1ST LT - Thomas C. Gorman, operations officer, Co B, 97th Engr Bn.

TO SP5 - William E. Bryant, carpenter, Co B, 97th Engr Bn.

TO SP5 - Jose H. Falcon, clerk, Co B, 97th Engr Bn.

97th ENGR BN HOST NEW TOP ENLISTED MAN – date unknown

CSM Lee G. Eckert has replaced MSG William B. Turner as the top enlisted man of the 97th Engr Bn at Ft Riley.

MSG Turner has been reassigned to the S-3 Plans and Operations Section of the 138th Engr Gp.

SGM Eckert just returned from three years of duty in the Republic of Vietnam with the 169th Engr Bn. In that position, in 1968, he was promoted to command sergeant major.

Entering the Army in 1941, CSM Eckert served with the 201st Inf and later with the 7th Div. Since 1948 he has served with the Engineer Corps.

After serving two years in Korea, CSM Eckert was transferred to Germany in 1952 for a three-year hitch with the 354th Engr Bn (now the 94th Engr Bn). Between 1955 and his tour in Vietnam, CSM Eckert put in three tours in Alaska and three in Korea.

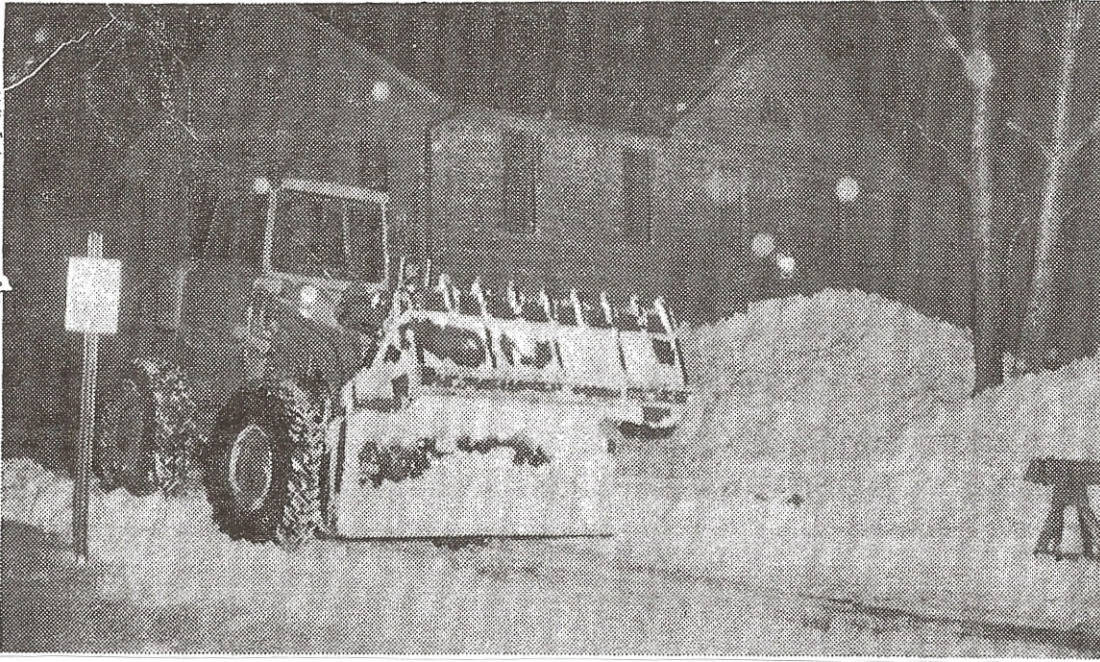
He has received the Soldiers Medal, two awards of the Bronze Star and the Army Commendation Medal.

An avid flyer ever since he got his license in 1947, CSG Eckert said that he has “flown almost every type of commercial plane except airliners,” and is looking forward to continuing his flying at Ft Riley.

SSG David W. Riley, Co B, 97th Engr Bn, was selected Post SSG of the Quarter for the 2nd quarter – date unknown.



Ah yes I remember it well, the great snow of 1971 – date unknown.



CHOMP CHOMP – SP4 Bob Knott, Co B, 97th Engr Bn and his scoop loader gobble up snow from the driveway by the Veterinary Hospital. (Photo by PFC Salvador Obregon)

ORIENTEERING TO BEGIN SOON – date unknown.

Another new sport will be introduced at Ft Riley in the near future – Orienteering.

A clinic will be conducted to inform people about the sport. The clinic will be held at King Fieldhouse on Tue, Apr 27.

Conducting the clinic will be LT Robert Seibert, Co C, 97th Engr Bn. LT Seibert was a member of the All Army Orienteering Camp and took part in the All Army tryouts in 1970.

Orienteering is a sport that includes the use of military skills, such as map reading and use of the compass, along with placing a premium on endurance and stamina. The sport consists of cross-country movement, guided by the map and compass, to specified points and distances against time.

RETIREMENTS – date unknown.

- SFC Willis D. Kingslover, 97th Eng Bn.
- SFC Luis A. Norat-Torres, 97th Engr Bn.
- SSG Woody E. Porter, 97th Engr Bn.
- SSG Bobby J. Stephens, 97th Engr Bn.
- SSG Edward F. Hlavacheck, Co B, 97th Engr Bn.
- SFC Edward L. Booker, HHC, 97th Engr Bn.
- SFC Theodore W. Potter, Co B, 97th Engr Bn.
- SSG Harmon A. McKee, Co A, 97th Engr Bn.
- SP5 Flanders Clemons, Co C, 97th Engr Bn.
- MSG Hobart Sharp, HHC, 97th Engr Bn.
- SFC Wilmer C. Dixon, Co B, 97th Engr Bn.
- SFC Donald D. Spain, HHC, 97th Engr Bn.

SFC William L. Thorton, HHC, 97th Engr Bn.

RECENTLY PROMOTED – date unknown.

SSG Mack Green, Jr., supply sergeant, Co A, 97th Engr Bn.

SSG Philip R. Jackson, construction foreman, Co D, 97th Engr Bn.

SP6 Donald E. Landrum, cook, Hqs Co, 97th Engr Bn.

SP6 Joseph Peterson, cook, Co A, 97th Engr Bn.

SP5 Keith A. Adkins, training clerk, Co D, 97th Engr Bn.

SP5 Joe E. Bell, logistics clerk, HHC, 97th Engr Bn.

SP5 Jimmy H. McKenzie, crane operator, Co D, 97th Engr Bn.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Printed pages from *The Fort Riley Post* were supplied by the director of Fort Riley museums, Robert Smith, and forwarded to the 97th EBC web site by BG Michael A. LePeilbet, following his personal visit to that installation in support of the battalion's history initiative.