

# Eugene Smith Patrick Francom

as interviewed by Judy Hansen  
July 2014



I was born in American Fork on the farm in 1932. The farm was actually between American Fork and Pleasant Grove. I didn't go to the hospital. My father was William Abraham Patrick. His parents came from England in 1910 when he was 13 years old. I was 8 months old when my mother separated from dad. I have a brother, two sisters, and a half-sister. My full older brother is Lionel and my older sister is Geraldine. She died when she was 50 years old. I have another full sister LaRae Hardman and a half-sister Miriam Francom. My mother was RhuEmma Jane Smith. When my real father got married again he had a daughter and two sons. I went to the schools in American Fork. In the 11<sup>th</sup> grade I transferred to Trade Tech in Provo and took drafting and construction classes. I didn't graduate from High School but I graduated from Trade Tech.

On Pearl Harbor day December 7, 1951 I married Joan Grace from Lehi. She is the daughter of Francis and Luella Grace. At first we lived in Pleasant Grove but then we built a little place in American Fork.

In June 1952 I joined the 1457<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion National Guard. I was 19 years old. I would work between the Lehi guard and the American Fork guard teaching heavy riggin' and heavy equipment operating. The 1457<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion would build roads, bridges, and airfields. Me and Bob Whimpey built the road that goes up Beef Hollow to Tickville. We both operated bull dozers. That is what we also did when we were regular Army.

Weekly we had meetings and then one week a year we had to go to camp. We had to certify with the rifle and shoot at camp. I was marksman of the company. We'd go out to Camp Williams. We had to shoot the ol' M1 Garand, the 30 caliber machine gun, the 50 caliber machine gun, and the bazooka; this is the one that would shoot the rocket that would blow the tracks off the tanks - It looked like a pipe. At that time Camp Williams was really neat. All there was out there was a few buildings and then tents. There were four of us men sleeping in one tent. We had kitchen KP and I remember peeling a lot of potatoes. We'd go out bivouac (pronounced bib-wack) and we'd have to do the dishes in galvanized garbage cans. It wasn't like it is now, we really were the old Army. We didn't have meals brought into us; didn't have

the beautiful buildings that are out at Camp Williams now; and there were no phones. I was in the guard for three years.



I don't like to think about my military experience much although we did have fun. We would have to build the fire breaks that you can still see out at Camp Williams. We'd have to cut out all the wood and peel out all the grass in strips so fire couldn't jump from one side to the other.

One time they came up and told me they needed me and my cat down at the airstrip. I remember going over the top of the hills and down the valley to get there. I got down there and found out they needed the hanger moved but they had already hooked two big troop carrier trucks onto it and moved it so I went for this long ride for no reason at all.

When they had Governors day we all had to dress up in our pretty clothes and march up and down on the field for him. They had Governors day every year.

When we'd play war out at Camp Williams it was just like we were in combat. The planes would come over and bomb us with little sacks of flour. I only got hit once. I was tearing brush down to get it out of the way so I could cut the road. A plane came over and I got hit; There was flour all over me and the caterpillar.

One time I was backing up the hill to push the brush up the hill and I kicked the cat out of gear so I could roll back down. I hit the gas can holder in the back of a jeep and that jeep flew about 20 feet in the air. Then I found out it was the Colonel and his aide. They were in the jeep and thankfully they didn't get hurt. The jeep jump 20 feet and then just landed back on the road.

I use to get so mad at those guys. When I was teaching heavy rigging<sup>1</sup> I would cut the heavy rock stuff with the cat and we would put a shank charge in which blows a hole down into the ground. It stands on legs about two feet long and then you fill it with explosives to break the rock and everything up. I'd tell those guys to get out of the way. One day three of them went up to sit by an oak to smoke a cigarette and when that charge went off that angle iron flew up and cut the brush right above their heads. It's funny it didn't kill all three of them.

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<sup>1</sup> Lifting heavy stuff with a crane

Then we use to disarm landmines for practice. They weren't real landmines; they would use blocks of wood with those cherry bomb things under them. Instead of those guys diggin' down and taking the igniter out and then moving the mine they would flip it with their bayonet. One of those kids got his face full of gravel. You could tell some of these guys were really not too smart.

I transferred to Active Reserves. The headquarters was up in Heber. Our company; the 1457<sup>th</sup> got called to Korea. We all went up to Fort Douglas took all the tests; both physical and mental, got the shots, and was ready to go. Then they came to us and told us we were on hold because they didn't need us right then. It came time for me and Bob Whimpey to get our discharge. Two weeks after my discharge they sent my unit overseas to Korea. The Armistice agreement had been signed on July 27<sup>th</sup>, 1953 but from July through November 1954 our troops were there exchanging the dead through operation glory. Although I was no longer on active duty I still had to serve time. I continued to do weekly assignments only this was through the Army and not the guard. I was formally discharged on June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1960.

I'm glad I didn't have to use these skills because I wouldn't have enjoyed killing people. One sad part of the Korean War was those women who would be carrying a baby with explosives on them; they'd walk into a group of soldiers, then blow herself the baby and everyone else up. The soldiers got to where they had to shoot the women before they even got to them.

In 1957 or 1958 we moved to Lehi. We bought this lot and had a small one bedroom house moved here.<sup>2</sup> We lived in that as we built on around it.

Outside the military I worked construction – Iron work. I worked on the Marriott Center, the BYU Law Library, the Student Union building, BYU student housing. I also worked on the Provo Temple, twelve bridges over the freeway when they put that in, the Ogden Tabernacle, a bunch of schools in both Utah and Salt Lake Counties including the Lehi High School and the American Fork High School, some bridges up Spanish Fork Canyon, the Holy Cross Hospital, a bunch of buildings at the University of Utah, and then I worked for twelve years at Geneva Steel for the American Bridge company. They were the contract company to rebuild everything. Right toward the end of my retirement I was the General Foreman at the Fabrication yard for Consolidated Western Steel on the west side of Geneva by Hecket<sup>3</sup>. We fabricated the steel for Los Angeles Memorial Sports Arena and had it sent to California.

I had back surgery and couldn't go back doing steel work so the Doctor made me retire when I was fifty. After I retired I started refinishing antique furniture. I had people coming from Arizona and everywhere to have me make claw feet for their old furniture. If a piece was missing a foot I'd hand carve a new one to match the others. I've made a lot of furniture (Eugene showed me some beautiful pieces he made that are in his home). I have a real nice shop out

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<sup>2</sup> 1919 N 500 W, Lehi

<sup>3</sup> Hecket is a contracted company that took care of the tailings at Geneva.

there. I've done a lot of that to waste my time. I also used to turn a bunch of bowls and stuff on the lathe.

Oh! And then I oil painted. (he has several paintings hanging throughout his home that his wife showed me) I've painted pretty near all the old buildings of Lehi, the old schools, the churches, and this picture of the Lehi Tabernacle (as he points to the picture hanging on the wall beside us). When they tore the Lehi Tabernacle down and built the Stake Center across from the fire station I was the night supervisor. We put all the foundation in pouring these ten foot walls. There was a basement there they wanted to fill full of dirt. I told the Architect that filling it full of dirt was not right. I said, "Let's put a slab on top here and then you will have those great big rooms there in the basement." Finally I talked him into it so we did and now it is the Genealogy Extraction Center in Lehi. It is the perfect temperature down there. That is the only thing that is left of the Lehi Tabernacle is that basement area. We had to pour the new walls and stuff but that hole and basement was there from the old Tabernacle.

I have memories of the old Lehi 4<sup>th</sup> ward. My Grandfather, Joseph Jesse Patrick was working on the addition of that church building. He was digging the foundation and when it came time for them to quit for the night they couldn't find him anywhere. When they went looking for him they found him lying dead in the footings of the old 4<sup>th</sup> ward church. He moved here to Lehi in 1910 from England and lived in a home on 900 East between 400 and 500 North.

I took my picture of the Star Flour Mill in American Fork to two or three shows and won ribbons for it. My Parkinson's disease has gotten so bad that I can't paint anymore. Anyway – I've stayed busy since I've retired.

Joan and I are the parents of three boys: Eugene, Kurtley, and Kirk.

# Honorable Discharge



from the Federally Recognized National Guard

*This is to certify that*

Eugene S. Frensdon

Private First Class, 28954219, Company B, 1457th Engr Bn(C) Army

was Honorably Discharged from the NATIONAL GUARD OF

THE STATE OF UTAH

on the 16th day of February, Nineteen Hundred and Fifty-Four

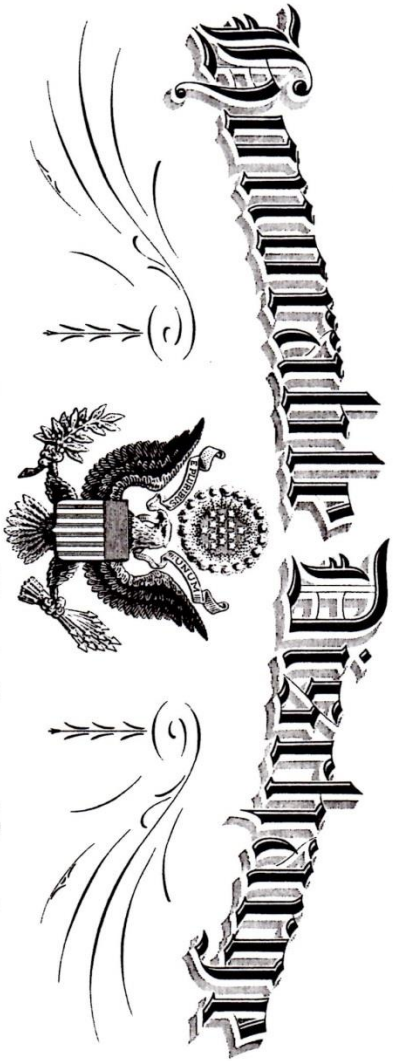
*This certificate is awarded as a testimonial of Honest and Faithful Service*

FIT SHALL NOT BE CONSTRUED AS RELIEVING THE INDIVIDUAL NAMED HEREIN FROM HIS ENLISTMENT AS A RESERVE OF THE ARMY OR FROM ANY RESERVE OR SERVICE OBLIGATION TO WHICH HE MAY BE SUBJECT UNDER THE PROVISIONS OF THE UNIVERSAL MILITARY TRAINING AND SERVICE ACT, AS AMENDED.

*William M. Allen*  
WILLIAM M. ALLEN

Major, CE, 1457th Engr Bn(C) Army  
Commanding

FORM 553  
1 JUN 53



from the Armed Forces of the United States of America

*This is hereby that*

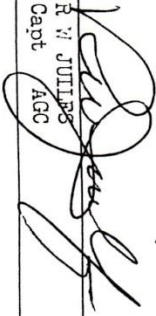
EUGENE S FRANCON, ER 23 934 219, PFC, INF, USAR  
who enlisted 3 June 1952 and transferred to the Army Reserve 17 February 1954

*was Honorably Discharged from the*

**Army of the United States**

*on the* 2nd *day of* June 1960 *This certificate is awarded*

*as a testimony of Honor and Faithful Service*

  
R W JULIUS  
Capt  
AGC