

Gary Ferdinand Evans

as interviewed by Judy Hansen
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In my high school days I was called 'Ferd' after my dad who was William Ferdinand Evans; but he went by Ferd. He played basketball for BYU under that name. We both got the name Ferdinand by Charles Ferdinand Johnson who migrated to this country from Norway. I was born in the old Lehi Hospital. My dad was a miner and he moved around a lot. He was working out at Kennecott Copper and we lived in Magna for my first five years. The pollution was so bad out there that my mother finally talked him into moving to Salt Lake City. We lived there for three or four years and then moved to Lehi when I was in the fifth grade. I spent the rest of my school years in Lehi. At first we rented a place south of Main Street and then we moved into a home at 141 West 100 North by the old High School football field. I graduated from Lehi High in 1953 then enrolled in Utah State University where I graduated after four years.



Before I got out of high school in 1952 I had enlisted in the Lehi Unit of the Utah National Guard when I was seventeen which was pretty common in those days. A lot of my classmates did this because we didn't want to get drafted into the Korean War. At Utah State you were required to enroll in ROTC¹ unless you had a physical disability so I took ROTC. In those days you could join and serve in the National Guard and still enroll in ROTC. They later changed that but I've always been thankful for my four years as an enlisted man with the National Guard because as an Officer it helped me to see things at an enlisted man's point of view. When I graduated in 1957 from Utah State I also graduated from ROTC and was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant in the Army Reserve. As soon as I got my commission I had to resign from the National Guard. I went from a Corporal in the National Guard to a 2nd Lieutenant in the US Army within one day. The Army Reserve is just like the National Guard but it is Federal and the Guard is State.

I signed a contract and was expected to serve three years but they didn't need Officers so they changed my contract and my orders were only for six months. My first active duty was at Fort Knox, Kentucky where I went through Armor Officer Basic Training. After six months I returned to the State of Utah and went back to Utah State University and got a Master's Degree in Health and Physical Education.

¹ Reserve Officer Training Corp

Linda Fox from Lehi went up there at that time. We got engaged and then married in 1959. I took my first job that same year as a High School Teacher and coach in Shelley Idaho. Being in the Army reserve with an eight year commitment I had to find a reserve unit close by that I could serve in. I had been serving in the 889th Quarter Master Petroleum Depot Company in Logan, Utah but when I took that job in Shelley I served in the 449 Civil Affairs Unit in Rexburg, Idaho which was the closest reserve unit I could find. I was only there two years and then moved back to Utah.

I moved to Brigham City and took a job as a teacher and coach in Box Elder School District. I went to one reserve drill with the 889th Quarter Master Company back in Logan when that unit was mobilized during the Berlin Crisis. Linda and I had one tiny baby girl, Allyson and it was a pretty traumatic experience for me leaving a wife and tiny daughter. I couldn't take them back to Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri which is where we were assigned. I served there for a year but after being there only two and a half months tensions eased off at the Berlin wall so Linda was able to bring our daughter back there to be with me. I was an operations officer which meant largely training. We trained pumping water out of a river into storage tanks which simulated gasoline. There were all kinds of training activities going on during that time.

I came back to Utah and Linda was nine months pregnant past due to have our second child. We drove back in 100° temperatures and when we had just got into Brigham City she had our son, Gary Ferdinand Evans Jr. While she was in the hospital giving birth to him the Superintendent of Schools told me I could have my job back at Box Elder Jr. High but I would have to teach Geography because they let someone else teach my Health and Physical Education classes. I told them someone may teach their Geography class but it wouldn't be me. I resigned right there while she was in the hospital. I came down to Murray, Utah where I had seen a job advertisement and took a job at Hillcrest Jr. High. I taught Health and Physical Education also coaching basketball and stayed there five years. During that time my reserve assignment was in the 96th ARCOM; Army Reserve Command at Fort Douglas, Utah. This was the best reserve assignment you could have if you wanted to be promoted because it was commanded by a two star General and they had all kinds of assignments for Colonels, Majors, and up the ranks. We also had our third child while I was there.

After five years of teaching and coaching at Hillcrest Jr. High School I had already made the decision to go back and get my Doctorate, which I did at the University of Utah. I would teach all day at Hillcrest, coach in the afternoon, and go to the "U" two nights a week for my Doctorate. After four years of that, the only thing I had left to do was my Doctoral dissertation so I resigned the position in Murray and went up to the University of Utah as a Graduate teaching Assistant allowing me some income as I was completing my Doctorate. That was in 1967-1968. In 1968 after I received my Doctoral degree I applied for several college positions because I wanted to be a college Professor and teach physical education at the University Level. I had three opportunities come in quite quickly. In those days it was pretty easy to get a college position if you had a Doctorate degree, even in physical education where there has always been a glut of people who want to be physical education teachers.

I took a position at Montana State University in Bozeman much to the dismay of my wife who wanted to go south where it was warm. The other two opportunities that came in were in Wisconsin which would

have been colder than Bozeman and Denver which was just as cold. So in 1968 we went to Bozeman, Montana and I had to leave the 96th Army Reserve Command. The only reserve position open in Bozeman was the 250th Quarter Master Company which I commanded as a Captain. My time was getting up to where I could be promoted to a Major if I could find an opening, which I did as luck would have it in Bozeman, Montana. There was a two man military history unit; a Major and a Sargent. The fellow that was commanding that unit worked at Montana State University as the Public Information Officer and his tenure was up so he resigned and I was able to get that position. I served there for five years and was promoted to Major. All this time, every year I had to go to summer camps. Most of which I served in Fort Lewis, Washington, but I have served all over. The fourth and fifth child in our family was born while we lived in Bozeman.

While I was commanding the 50th military history detachment; which I thought was a real plum assignment, for two of us working on and writing the history of the conflict in Vietnam. My sergeant and I got to serve five summer camps at Presidio San Francisco. The Presidio San Francisco was on the south shore of the Golden Gate Bridge. It was a beautiful army post which is no longer there; sad to say. It is now a National Park but at that time I could take my wife to summer camp every summer and we could see the sights of San Francisco while I was there. They were unforgettable years.

At summer camp, I worked with the 6th US Army Historian writing from materials out of archives on assignments he would give that had to do with the history of World War II, Vietnam War, or any of the wars. This is largely what we worked on. That is also what we did in reserve drill in Bozeman. We would go down to the United State Army Reserve Center and work on the history assignments there. This instilled in me a greater appreciation and interest in history that I had never heretofore had and appreciate those who work on our history. That was all an interesting process.

In the Army Reserve; just like the National Guard, as you go up in rank as an officer it is pretty easy to find assignments. When you are a Lieutenant, Captain, or Major but from there on it gets very difficult because there are all these Officers and only a few slots for Lieutenant Colonel and Colonel. I had to find another Army Reserve unit and in Montana distance became a real factor. I took an assignment with the 125th Ammunition Battalion in Billings Montana which was a drive of 140 miles from Bozeman. In Montana everything seemed like 140 miles between cities so I didn't think that much of it. I served in the 125th Ammunition Battalion for a year. I remember we did our summer camp that year at Camp Roberts, California and again I was an Operations Officer doing training. That was an interesting assignment but I did it so I could stay in the reserve program and keep active. I needed to find a home where I could be promoted to Lieutenant Colonel because after so many years you have to find a slot position; we called them slots, into an O5 Lieutenant Colonel to be promoted. The only places that had positions like that were Billings, Great Falls, Missoula, and Helena Montana. It was just really lucky for me that Helena, Montana was also the home of the 159th Support Group which was commanded by a full Colonel O6, and the Executive Officer was an O5; Lieutenant Colonel. I was fortunate enough after a pretty competitive process to get that position. I served as the Executive Officer in that Support Group for four and a half years. I learned that highway between Bozeman and Helena very well.

At that time, the Montana speed limit was very unique in the United States; it was called, "reasonable and prudent speed." If a Highway Patrolman stopped you for speeding your ticket was \$5.00 and you could reach in your pocket, give him a five dollar bill, it wouldn't go on your driving record, and you would be on your way. I got several tickets and I'm not proud of that but that is honestly how it was. I had to make it from my home in Bozeman to Helena in two hours and in order to do that you had to drive really fast.

I served in the 159th Support Group all that time and we had summer camps in a different place every year: Camp Picket Virginia, Fort Lee Virginia, Fort Lewis Washington, and Dugway Proving Grounds were some of the places I remember. After four and a half years in that assignment I was due to become an O6 full Colonel, which is more difficult to find. All these other Lieutenant Colonels from Billings, Missoula, and Great Falls were competing against me for the full Colonel position in Helena. I have to be honest; I had the advantage because I had been the Executive Officer in that unit. I knew all the troops, all the members, and people associated with that unit and had developed a good relationship with the General (2 star) who was in Fort Douglas. He selected me as the Commander for the 159th Support Group. It was him, General Larry Morris who pinned the full Colonel Eagle on me. When I tell people that I am retired 35 years with the Army Reserve as a Full Colonel most people can't even believe it.

One of the things you need to understand is in order to advance as an Officer in the Army Reserve program the regulations and rules are the same as active duty. You have to take care of your schooling so I had to complete the quartermaster officer basic course and career course at Fort Lee Virginia; which I took my family back there and completed through correspondence and residence.

To advance past a Major any place in the Army Reserve you have to graduate from the US Army Command and General Staff College in Fort Leavenworth Kansas. You can either complete that in correspondence or in residence. I was fortunate enough to be a Professor at Montana State University and it was easy to get a leave without pay from the University. I took my wife and children back to Fort Leavenworth Kansas for six months in 1974 and completed that in residence. This along with some other schooling enabled me to become a Lieutenant Colonel and later on a Colonel. I won't bore anyone with all the details of schooling but I also graduated from the Security Management Seminar Course outside Washington DC.

I became the commander of the 159th Support Group for four years. We were capstoned to the 9th Infantry Division in Fort Lewis Washington which means our war time mission was to support the 9th Infantry if we were called to war or mobilization. That means most of our summer camps were at Fort Lewis Washington but some of them were in Washington DC; one in particular was at Camp Pickett Virginia and one in Fort Bliss Texas out in the sand. The Army would assign us training that would help us prepare for wartime missions where ever they felt we were best suited to go. It was very challenging and very interesting. I was able to do that four more years at US Army Reserve regulations. Same as the guard and active duty; they let you command a unit for four years. Actually three years but if you have done a good job they will allow a year extension. I got the year extension then I was finished. That was in 1984. I was in my early 50's by the time I had completed my reserve retirement.

There have been many blessings from all my years in the Army Reserve. The best thing we got out of it; and my wife thanks the good Lord for, is the Tri-Care for Life Health and Medical Insurance. The Tri-Care for Life for a retired Reserve Officer is the same as an active duty Officer. You get your twenty years in and you get your military I.D. card and the wife gets hers. She has to renew hers every five years but mine is good for life. That gives us good health insurance benefits. As a cancer survivor I can't tell you how thankful we are to have Tri-Care for Life. I've had thousands and thousands of medical costs with chemotherapy, radiation therapy, and other ailments associated with the cancer that I had five or six years ago. We are really blessed to have Medicare and Tri-Care for Life. When I go anywhere and tell them what insurance I have there are never any questions asked. It covers almost everything. There are a lot of benefits besides the pay as a person moves up in ranks. We've got to see so many places in the United States and I consider that a benefit. A lot of those places I have been able to take my wife.

I've had two active duties tours both in Fort Leonard Wood Missouri, one in Fort Leavenworth Kansas, one in Kentucky, and one in Virginia. We've seen a lot of the State of Washington in Yakima Firing Ground and Fort Lewis, Camp Roberts in California, and Fort Bliss Texas. I've been very close to being mobilized and sent overseas; two or three times but it never happened. The years I had been mobilized during the Berlin crisis we were scheduled to go to Germany and France but the tensions eased enough we didn't have to leave. As a Commander of reserve units in Montana several of the reserve units that were under me; battalions and companies had detachments and served in Vietnam and the Persian Gulf conflicts but our headquarters never had to go until after I retired. The 2nd Commander after me in the 159th support group got called to the Far East in Kuwait where they served for a year. I consider it a real blessing that I didn't have to serve active duty in Afghanistan or Iraq although we were trained and ready.

I retired from the Army Reserve as a full Colonel in 1984 and had wonderful experiences. I continued to teach until I retired from Montana State University in the mid 1990's. Our Stake President was the Institute Director in Bozeman and he asked us to serve a mission. We served a C.E.S.² senior couples mission in New Zealand and taught institute classes. It was so nice. It wasn't like a mission it was more like a vacation.

After we got home from our mission my wife and I discussed where we should live for the rest of our lives. Linda and her sister Marilyn Schiess were left land by their father, Edward Fox and they decided to develop the Foxborough subdivision in Lehi. They developed twenty-six lots. We decided to keep a lot in the subdivision and we started building our new home May 2002 and finished it Halloween day that same year. We moved down here to Lehi. We were both former residents of Lehi and when we came back 35 years later many of the same people from the old 3rd Ward were still here. It was just like home for us. We try to go to the Lehi Legacy Center every day because as a Physical Education Instructor I am well versed in what happens if you don't exercise your body. I'm lucky enough to have found a wife that enjoys exercising more than I do. We've been blessed in many ways.

² Church Education System

We have five very precious children and 23 very-very precious grandchildren. All five of our children live out of the State; our youngest son lives in Denton, Texas; the oldest daughter lives in San Antonio; we have two daughters in Arizona; one in Thatcher and one in Prescott, and a son in Rexburg, Idaho.