

John Knollin Haws

as interviewed by Judy Hansen
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I am the oldest child of Jay Knollin and Edith Broadbent Haws. I was born in Lehi, Utah at home in an apartment over Grandfather Joseph Broadbent's store located at 128 N 100 E on Wednesday the 30th of January 1935 at 10:00 a.m. Dr. Elmo Eddington was the Doctor and Mrs. Christiana Bateman was the nurse. My siblings are Joseph Hugh, Ralph Jay, and Elaine (Mrs. J. H. Hadfield).

I grew up and attended schools in Lehi. I was seventeen and a half; I was a Jr. in High School and had been trying to enlist at age seventeen. The Korean War was going on and my mother was not too happy about the idea. She thought I would have to go to Korea. Subsequently, she finally agreed so I was able to join the guard. I enlisted in Company B 1457th Engineer Battalion Combat Army here in Lehi on the 14th of February 1952. The Korean War ended the next year.



It was towards the end of my senior high school year and I was in the guard. I knew that I would be going to Virginia during the summer so my high school sweetheart Shirley Jeanne (Smith) Messersmith¹ and her mother were concerned. They wanted to have a hold on me so I married her on the 8th of April 1953 in the Salt Lake Temple.

Following my graduation from Lehi High and Seminary in May 1953 I attended annual National Guard training at Camp Williams seven miles west of Lehi. At Camp Williams I was a young buck soldier; probably a private E1 or private E2. I was just going through the normal training that was scheduled. One of the things that was noteworthy in that training was the 'bibwack' we had out in the range west of the main Camp Williams property. A bibwack is where we would establish our camp in a field and then go and sleep overnight. We would set up the perimeter; part of it was in a combat defensive role and another part was a camp just inside the defense perimeter. I was given ½ of a shelter half and one wool blanket. That is all I had to sleep in that first annual training; it was cold and uncomfortable sleeping on the ground.

After I completed the annual training I flew back to the US Army Engineer School at Fort Belvoir, Virginia and attended Combat Engineer Construction Foreman Course. This course was

¹ She was from Cedar Fort and went by Smith even though her name was Messersmith. A couple of her brothers had their names legally changed to Smith.

the last two weeks of June, July, August and two weeks of September in 1953. We were about seventeen miles south of Washington D.C. near the Potomac River. I learned about demolitions; explosives and how to use them defensively and offensively and road building. They would have us go out and actually do it after we were trained. There was also reconnaissance and pioneering; that is where you would learn to use ropes to build things. Of course there was weapons training in a field environment. I was gone for the whole summer.

When I came back home I enrolled at BYU. I was two weeks late getting into school because of this training.

I was taking general math classes. I liked math because I didn't have to read 15 books of literature. During my junior year at BYU the Lehi National Guard Unit had come and asked me if I would like to take a position and work for the National Guard. I jumped at it, dis-enrolled from BYU, and started working full-time in the basement of the memorial building where the Veterans are now. I started working as an administrative supply technician with Company B, 1457th Engineer Battalion August 16th, 1955. I did all the work of ordering and maintaining the supplies, taking care of the administrative records of each individual and creating service records. Subsequently, after I was hired I was working and played a big role during the building of the Lehi Armory. That job was contracted to Springmire Construction Company out of Salt Lake City. After it was completed it was like moving into a new home; there were a lot of things that needed to be done. We were preparing for the opening ceremonies with Senator Walkins, General Rich, and all the other dignitaries as well as the dinner the day before; I had to go in a week prior and sealed the entire concrete floor. There were 600 to 700 people who attended that event. I remember I worked myself to a frazzle.

While I was in the Lehi unit I enlisted both my brothers in the National Guard as they became of age. Hugh became an NCO in the S-1 section and subsequently the retention NCO in the 115th Engineer Group Combat. Ralph ended up leaving the Engineers and joining the Special Forces at Camp Williams and subsequently returned to become a Warrant Officer/Troop Command in Utah National Guard.

I served here with Company B in Lehi for about 7 years. I was promoted to a Personnel Administrative Technician Warrant Officer in the headquarters company of the 115th Engineers Combat unit in Murray. This was the highest headquarters of all the Engineer units in Utah. I was selected over three other service members that were already personnel warrants from each of the three battalions. The officer in charge; Colonel Kingston of the engineer group liked me, my work ethic, my commitment, attitude, and my desire to be the best I could be so I was hired over the other three.

In the 1457 Engineer Battalion there was Company A in Price, Company B in Lehi, Company C in Provo, and the Battalion headquarters Company was in American Fork. There were three of these Battalions; the 1457th, 115th Engineer Battalion, and the 1334th Engineer Battalion. This 115th Engineer group that I was promoted into was over these three Battalions plus the 117th Engineer Company panel bridge and the 116th Engineer Company light equipment down in Springville. I was over all of this administratively and responsible to monitor it.

I went to OCS² and subsequently the year I graduated³ as Second Lieutenant I also received the outstanding 1st Sargent award and received my commission all within the same two week period. During my graduation I got a trophy and was recognized as the best Sargent in the Utah National Guard; then they pinned the bars⁴ on me. There wasn't a position for me to work full time right then so I stayed on in my warrant officer job until January 1967 when I got my commission with the 115th Engineer Battalion in Murray. This was co-located in the same Armory as the 115th Engineer Combat group. I became the operations and training officer there being promoted by the same officer, Colonel Kingston who had hired me out of Lehi.

I became the assistant S-3 and worked as the operations and training officer for a number of years. As the years went by I was promoted to S-1 Adjutant Command Administrative Officer as Captain in the 115th Engineer Battalion and subsequently promoted to Major. My assignments were a military position and my job was a civilian job so it didn't make any difference if I was a Captain or a Major. I was over all these Battalions reporting to a Commander in Salt Lake. I was kind-of-like the CEO of an organization. I was responsible to manage the organization. Even though there were other employees in my office; the administrative warrant officer, training NCO, etc. who worked for me, I eventually became the Adjutant S-1 over all personnel.

Up until now in my military career and during the Berlin crisis the 115th Engineer Battalion was called to active duty and went to Fort Lewis, Washington; the 116th light equipment company was called and went to Fort Lewis, Washington; and I had been called to help activate them in their subsequent destinations.

I felt like one of the greatest achievements of my career was when I completed and graduated from the Nuclear Weapons Employment and Target Analysis Officer Course and artillery school at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. That is where you analyze and decide what type of nuclear weapon is best to use and preclude the damages. It was quite a challenging course and very intense. My Commander in Engineer Group; Colonel West sent a couple of Officers part-time and they failed it. He then asked me if I would go. I was really concerned. I knew if I went it would be my full-time job. I went and graduated. As I drove home in my pick-up truck and knew that I made that accomplishment I was the most happiest man on the face of the earth. We never had to use it but our unit had to be trained how to transport, secure, and manage units with those types of capabilities.

General Watts called me one day and asked me how I would like to become the key guy in a brand new unit. I was excited to do it and he told me it would provide an opportunity to get me promoted. This was a big deal because I would never have been able to get promoted working in Murray. In 1979 I went up to Fort Douglas and took over Troop Command.

I had to start a brand new unit. I selected three other employees; a personnel officer Mark Burn, a training officer Major Skillicorn, and an operations training NCO Sargent Seeley. I worked fourteen years in Troop Command and my last two years I worked out of the National Guard building just off I-15 in Draper as the Senior Administrative Officer. We had a lot of units under

² Officer Candidate school

³ 1960

⁴ Insignia of a commissioned officer

us; we had attack helicopter, 144th Evacuation Hospital, 115th Maintenance Company, 625th Military Policy (MP) Company, 128th Military Public Detachment Unit, and the 141st Linguists Unit. The Linguists eventually became a Battalion and then subsequently gained two Battalions and a Brigade Headquarters while I was there. At Troop Command I was promoted to Lt. Colonel and then to Colonel.

Following my retirement full time and my military assignment as a Colonel there was a need in the unit to help administratively so the General's office called me in and asked if I would like to come and be a Warrant Officer back in Headquarters Utah National Guard in Draper and be assigned to the 144th Evacuation Hospital. They were a unit of 400 people. So again I was involved with personnel administration. I worked with them for about three years and during that period of time the Gulf War came and we were called to active duty in November of 1990.

There were a lot of Doctors and Nurses that were officers and we had to get them all credentialed. We would have to verify their graduation from college, their graduation for their field of specialty, their State Licenses and prepare a personnel folder on each of them called the credential file. We did not have this on them at that time. After we got to Fort Carson, Colorado I was busy fourteen hours a day just working to create those files. For each document I had, I would have to send a copy of the document, call the appropriate place, and have the document verified. I would have to log the date, whom it was verified by, and the originating headquarters for each document. After this was done we left Fort Carson and went to Saudi Arabia in January of 1991.

When we got to Saudi Arabia we set up our hospital at the King's military airport. Saudi Arabia had two airports; the commercial international airport and the King's own private airport. His airport was massive but it was all private. We set up there and we were given a special assignment to take care of chemical, biological, and nuclear casualties if there were any. None of that happened but we had scud missiles come near us two of three times that would drop, hit, and explode. President Bush let Saddam Hussein know if they used gas or anything of a chemical or biological nature he would unleash the might of the U.S. against him. They never did but they always sent the scud's with the demolition kind of stuff in them.

Although there was no type of the casualties we were prepared for, the King wouldn't let us bring in any casualties of the Iraqis or any other international folks. We had a Norwegian medical unit nearby for that. The protocol was that nobody could come in on that military property except those whom he had authorized; mostly we took care of just American casualties. We had about five Americans that died through road accidents and we pretty much took care of whatever happens in a community of soldiers; illnesses and such. I was the Personnel Warrant Officer because I had worked with the Hospital Commander before he made me his personal assistant. I did a lot of his personal letters, dictations, awards, and other things he wanted done. He treated me just like I was a Colonel in terms; taking me where he went so I got to be treated like more than just a Warrant Officer. He would always make note that I use to be his commander. He always treated me kind and it was a nice assignment.

I was released from active duty in September of 1991. I went back and worked in the unit for a time but then I was pulled from the hospital unit and started to maintain the credential records for

not only the hospital but all the medical units and personnel throughout all the Utah National Guard. While I was there I also had an assignment on the awards committee and a couple of other little things. I stayed there until January 1995 the year I turned 60. I was done working and was eligible to apply for my military retirement. I was a Deputy Commander Colonel grade 06.

I spent 42 years 11 months and 14 days in the National Guard. I was in there from the time I joined as a Jr. in high school and stayed until my 60th birthday. I served as an enlisted man NCO⁵, warrant officer, and commissioned officer. In my personal life I was always known as Knollin but in my military life I was John K Haws. I always had an interest in serving but I never thought I would have spent my entire career there.

I had been married for 44 years. My wife contracted and died of breast cancer Oct 18, 1997. We were the parents of six children; one daughter Kristine died at age 5 of Leukemia, John Knollin Jr. (Jeanette), David E., Laurene (Jordan Dinehart), Eric R (Ruth Ann), and Heidi (Dr. Robert E Hansen) have all lived to adulthood.

On August 29, 1998 I subsequently married Deanna Egli Shuman and she had four children; Gregory, Sue Anne, Frank, and Matt. Together we continue to live in the home⁶ that my father and I built in 1963. In 2007, we became snowbirds and have lived in our winter home at Cherokee Springs, Washington, Utah from October to March of every year.

Besides my military career I have also dedicated much of my life providing service in my community, my church, and the Scouting program.

Military Awards received:

- Legion of Merit
- Meritorious Service Medal with three Oak-leaf clusters
- Army Commendation Medal with three Oak-leaf clusters
- Army Achievement Medal with three Oak-leaf clusters
- Army Reserve Components (National Guard) Achievement Medal with six Oak-leaf clusters
- National Defense Service Medal with two bronze stars
- Army Service Ribbon
- NCO Professional Development Ribbon (3)
- Army Reserve Components Overseas Service Ribbon
- Southwest Asia Service Medal with 2 Bronze Stars
- Kuwait Liberation of Kuwait Medal
- Humanitarian Service Medal, 2 each
- Saudi Arabian Liberation of Kuwait Liberation Medal
- The Bronze Order of the De Fleury Medal (United States Army Corps of Engineers)
- Utah National Guard Service Ribbon
- Utah National Guard Achievement Ribbon with Silver Beehive Attachment
- Utah National Guard Commendation Medal with Silver Beehive Attachment

⁵ Non-Commissioned Officer

⁶ 63 South 200 East, Lehi

Military Education

- Command and General Staff College; 5 years (part & full time), Fort Leavenworth, Kansas
- Director of Administration, Personnel and Community Affairs (G-1) Course; 5 weeks, Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana
- Sales and Management Course; 1 week, Salt Lake City, Utah
- National Security Course; 3 weeks, US Army War College, Fort McNair, Virginia
- Nuclear Weapons Employment and Target Analysis Officer Course; 8 weeks, Fort Sill, Oklahoma
- Engineer Officer Advanced Course; 20 weeks (part & full time), Fort Belvoir, Virginia
- Engineer Staff Officer Refresher Course; 1 week, Fort Belvoir, Virginia
- Engineer Officer Construction Course; (nonresident)
- Engineer Officer Basic Course; 10 weeks, Fort Belvoir, Virginia
- Air Mobility Training; 1 week, Fort Benning, Georgia
- Administrative Officer Course; 2 weeks, Fort Belvoir, Virginia
- Adjutant General Officer Basic Course; (nonresident), Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana
- Officer Candidate School; 1 year, Fort Benning, Georgia and Camp Williams, Utah
- Construction Management Officer Course; 3 weeks, Fort Belvoir, Virginia
- Utah Army National Guard Military Academy 13 months (part & full time)
- Military Personnel Officer Course; 5 weeks, Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana
- Advanced Leader NCO Leadership Course; 3 weeks, Fort Ord, California
- Personnel Management Course; 5 weeks, Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana
- Equipment Maintenance/Operational Records; 1 week, Fort Lewis, Washington
- NCO and Officer Chemical, Biological, Radiological (nuclear) Courses; 4 weeks, Fort Lewis, Washington
- Officer and NCO Atomic Demolitions Courses; 6 weeks, Fort Belvoir, Virginia
- Administrative NCO Course; 3 weeks, U.S. Army Adjutant General School, Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana