

Local War Veteran Enjoys Role As National Guard Commander

BY TERRY POPE

Danny Hickman has developed a reputation for his calmness, quickness and forcefulness in reaching the right decisions—both in combat and as an educator.

Jokes aside, combat and education, he says, make a good combination.

"I think the training I've had in the military gives me skills that carry over to help make me effective in my job," he said.

The Hickman's Crossroads native, who now lives in Leland, is commander of the 120th Infantry Battalion. He's in charge of 11 North Carolina Army Reserve National Guard Armories, including Shallotte's, and 829 soldiers.

As dean of continuing education at Cape Fear Community College, Hickman, 44, plans for and supervises a team of 200 full- and part-time faculty members who offer adult education classes to more than 20,000 people each year.

He works closely with the college president and community leaders to design needed programs. However, two weekends a month and five to six weeks a year, he dedicates time to his Army Reserve National Guard units. It's time spent away from his wife, Martha, and three children, Russell, 13; Claire, 16; and Hank, 18.

Soldiers fight battles less than one percent of the time. During the other 99 percent, they are in training.

For Hickman, his biggest battle was a year of active duty as a U.S. Army helicopter pilot in Vietnam.

During 1,000 hours of combat flying he piloted three types of helicopters—"slicks," Cobra gun ships and Scouts—and is still rated as an aviator, occasionally flying helicopters for his units. When a helicopter arrives to transport the commander to a training site, Hickman will sometimes take the controls himself.

"It's like balancing a ball on a stick," said Hickman. "It takes a lot of eye and hand coordination. But most people can learn to fly a helicopter if given enough time."

His missions in Vietnam are well-documented. With the B Troop, 3rd Squadron, 17th Air Cavalry, Hickman received an Air Medal with V for valor.

A recommendation for commission written by Captain Elmore P. Jordan notes Hickman's remarkable ability as a warrant officer to lead during combat assaults, medical evacuations and night hunter operations.

Once during a night combat assault, Hickman inserted a team of U.S. soldiers for a night ambush patrol when the team came under heavy enemy fire. Quickly sizing up the situation, he called for additional troops, lift ships and gun ships. The pilot coordinated efforts with

the parent troops and the ground commander, but during the operation a medevac aircraft crashed into the landing zone after attempting to pick up wounded soldiers.

Hickman was able to hover his aircraft and use suppressive fire on the enemy while directing the ground commander to a new landing zone.

The recommendation states that Hickman "not only has the potential for leadership in combat, but has most instrumental (skills) in promoting an atmosphere conducive to harmony and working long hours to get the job done."

He "displayed calmness, quickness and forcefulness in reaching the right decisions" and would be a tribute to the commissioned ranks of the U.S. Army, Captain Jordan noted on May 7, 1969.

Just 22 days later, Hickman was involved in another attack for which he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, an award given for heroism while participating in aerial flight above and beyond the call of duty.

Hickman was flying as pilot of a transport helicopter in support of a reconnaissance operation when he inserted a team of rangers into an area and made a false insertion about 300 meters away. The rangers were ambushed

"I sort of grew into it. It sort of gets into your blood."

—Danny Hickman
Army National Guard

by an enemy force of unknown size. Two soldiers were killed and one was wounded.

"Immediately receiving their call for help, he flew back to the area and directed fire on enemy positions while clearing the aircraft commander and helicopter into the landing zone," the orders state.

"He directed the loading of the casualties which allowed the ship to be hoisted in place. His bravery and determination saved several lives and accomplished the mission of finding the enemy," Col. Leo Turner noted.

Today, Hickman's thoughts of Vietnam are at times mixed.

"Sometimes I get a little excited when I talk about it," he said. "I think that's just the stress coming out a little bit at a time. It was really a dynamic experience that shaped the course of my life."

The Shallotte High School graduate is the son of Harold Hickman of Hickman's Crossroads and Virginia Post of Wilmington. He earned a bachelor's degree in management from Embry Riddle University while sta-

tioned in the Army in Florida and later received a master's degree in education administration from the University of North Carolina at Wilmington.

When Hurricane Hugo struck the South Carolina coast in 1989, Hickman took charge of the local National Guard units in the commander's absence, mobilizing 200 men. He set up a command post and deployed soldiers to Holden Beach, Sunset Beach and Ocean Isle Beach, but the storm turned south and made landfall at Charleston, S.C.

Damage was still substantial on Holden Beach, where Hickman and the soldiers secured the beach until debris could be cleared. Hugo kept the soldiers there for about a week.

Assignments have also carried him to Italy on numerous occasions, enough so that he has learned the Italian language, as well as to Puerto Rico and other European countries. Soldiers were deployed for Hurricane Diana in 1985 and began rigorous training during Operation Desert Storm last year. But his 120th Battalion wasn't called into action during the Persian Gulf war.

"We were feverishly getting prepared for that," said Hickman. "I enjoy putting together a plan and leading people through it, where there's an element of excitement or risk and other people are as just determined as you are."

There are some social activities that families can participate in, but mostly serving in the National Guard requires time away from the family. His children once called him "Major Dad," but since the promotion have chosen a new name, "Colonel Dad."

From where does the determination and dedication to serve 16 years in the National Guard spring?

"I sort of grew into it," he said. "It sort of gets into your blood."

There is a tradition of military service in his family. His father was a sergeant of the Shallotte unit of the National Guard and was also a World War II veteran.

Hickman followed in his footsteps, serving as the hometown commander of the Shallotte unit in the mid-1970s.



STAFF PHOTO BY TERRY POPE
UPON RETURNING FROM VIETNAM, Danny Hickman entered the field of education and joined the Army Reserve National Guard. Today he commands 11 armories.

He has traced some relatives to the Civil War battle at Fort Fisher. Of a family of brothers who fought there, one was killed, another died in captivity and two were paroled and walked home. The family was determined to carry on the name of the ancestor killed in battle, Henry. It is the name given to Hickman's first son.

Hickman says he will remain in the Guard for a few more years. This weekend, he and some troops will travel to Ft. Benning, Ga., to participate in live fire assault training.

"As long as I'm needed and it remains fun and rewarding," he said. "If I feel like I can be an effective leader and a trainer, then I feel like I'm contributing what I should be."

"It's very demanding training. I'll reach some point where I feel like it's time to go. More than likely someone will make that decision for me."

EAGLES

BURGER KING

WACCAMAW ELEMENTARY BOOSTER NIGHT AT BURGER KING

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 25 5-8 P.M.

BRING THE FAMILY AND EAT WITH YOUR TEACHER!!!

20% OF ALL SALES WILL BE DONATED TO WACCAMAW ELEMENTARY

PLEASE SUPPORT YOUR SCHOOL

house payment insurance premium educational loans loan vacation

Tired of waiting for Your Tax Refund?

Get your Refund in as little as 24 Hours!!

Cost of Refund Anticipation Loan Service—\$64.00

Try Us... **Diana Clewis Income Tax Service**

For The FASTEST TAX SERVICE

Fast Refunds also on Returns prepared by yourself or others.

100% Dedication to Client Satisfaction.

Clip Ad for \$5.00 off Tax Preparation Fee.

*Three well-qualified Tax Preparers
*Computerized Service—Electronic Filing with Direct Deposit.
*Preparation rates from \$20. (which include both Fed. & State)
*Out-of-State (Resident & Non-Resident)—SC, VA, CA and MD

Super Fast Refunds

Holden Beach Road (Hwy. 130E), 1/2 Mile east Bus #17 Beside JR's Steak House, Shallotte, NC
Hours: 8:30 am to 7:30 pm • (919)754-8979

Hills

Deli/Bakery

Hwy 17
Shallotte, NC
Deli/Bakery Open 6am-6pm

For special orders, party trays, cakes, etc...
Call Denise at 754-7100

Prices good thru February 26, 1992

Deli Specials

Fresh Baked French Bread	----	.69	loaf
Chocolate or Yellow			
8" Round Layer Cake	-----	4.99	each
Deli Fresh Turkey Breast	-----	3.99	lb
Deli Boiled Ham	-----	1.99	lb
Deli Style Cole Slaw	-----	.99	lb
Chicken Dinner	-----	1.99	ea
2 pieces chicken, 2 vegetables and roll			

In-Store Coupon **Good thru Feb. 26, 1992**

Limit one dozen per coupon
Good only at Hills # 12
Hwy 17, Shallotte, North Carolina

Fresh Baked Glazed Donuts

\$1.29 Dozen