

Matt Brooks

Maurice Matthew Brooks was born April 9, 1946 in Berlin N.H. He attended Bethel Primary and Crescent Park schools prior to entering Gould Academy. At Gould Academy (1960-1964) he was a member of the Yearbook staff, the Camera Club, lettered in baseball (team captain in 1964) and received honors on MTA testing with high honors in math.

After graduating from Gould Academy, he enrolled at the University of Maine in Orono, Maine. In 1966, he married a Gould classmate, Judy Judkins, of Upton, Maine. In 1968, he received a B.A. degree with an English major from the University of Maine. Also in 1968 he was hired by his former Crescent Park School principal and teacher, Charlie Heino, to teach English classes in grades 5-8 at Minot Consolidated Elementary School in Minot, Maine. He taught at Minot for the 1968/69 school year before being inducted into the U.S. Army on September 18, 1969.

Matt attended 8 weeks of basic training at Fort Dix, New Jersey and stayed there for a few more months training. While there he became a Private E-2 as an administrative clerk. In 1970 he transferred to Fort Meade, Maryland where he was trained as a computer specialist which entailed analyzing and correcting information to be entered into the computer system. While there he was promoted to PFC (E-3).

In November 1970, he was transferred to the Republic of Vietnam. Upon landing at Bien Hoa Air Force Base on November 3, 1970, he was greeted by the sound of enemy rockets. From Bien Hoa he was moved to the Headquarters/Headquarters Detachment (HHD), 90th Replacement Battalion at Long Binh, Vietnam, just outside Saigon. While receiving his indoctrination, he was selected to remain at the 90th Replacement to work with computers used to track incoming and outgoing troops. A short distance from the well-sandbagged Quonset hut where he worked was an area where incoming troops assembled to receive their assignment orders for duty throughout the country or to get their daily assignments if their orders had not been processed to send them elsewhere in Vietnam. He will never forget the day soldiers standing in formation, many of whom had been in Vietnam less than a day, were hit with rocket fire. Often soldiers were given a siren warning of incoming fire and could get to protective bunkers but that did not happen that time. He and others in the computer building heard the nearby explosion(s); and soon thereafter someone came in and reported the rocket had injured some of the soldiers awaiting assignment. At least one had been killed. Matt has never forgotten his immediate thought that the soldier(s) had probably been killed before the family even knew he(they) had left the states, given the lack of modern communications like those used in Afghanistan and Iraq (cell phones, e-mail, etc.).

Another vivid memory was on Christmas day(1970) working in the Quonset hut, listening to Bob Hope entertain the troops somewhere in South Vietnam and how different it was from other Christmases he had experienced.

While in Vietnam Matt obtained a grade of Specialist 4 as a computer analyst. Later, his MOS was changed to Card Punch Operator (71U40), and he was promoted to a "hard

stripe sergeant" (E-5) instead of a specialist. Typically, soldiers stayed in Vietnam for a 12 month tour. With about three months of his time in Vietnam remaining, he received an early discharge for educational reasons. This allowed him to take college courses during the summer to retain his certification to teach elementary students.

He returned from Vietnam on May 15, 1971. At this stage of the Vietnam War, it was not unusual for soldiers to return from Vietnam, not as members of a large unit, such as a battalion, but as individuals without anyone with whom they served. He experienced the same phenomenon as many others who returned: no fanfare, a quiet meal, and a requirement to fill out some paperwork. He would later receive his notification of an Honorable Discharge in the mail. He received a 20% disability rating for Agent Orange related conditions. He was awarded the Vietnam Campaign Medal, the Vietnam Service Medal and a National Defense Service Medal for his service. The actual required commitment to the Army, at that time, was 6 years; thus Matt was in the inactive reserves (subject to recall) for four more years.

When Matt came home, he believed life could be short and end at any time; thus he decided he was not ready to settle down and divorced Judy. He went on to take the required courses for teacher certification at the University of Maine. Vietnam veterans had difficulty in many parts of their lives after returning from the war and Matt was no exception, even as a student. One instructor was very supportive and appreciated his service, another less so. He believed he experienced this same stigma while looking for a teaching position. It seemed as if the school administrators were afraid to have a Vietnam veteran in the classroom. He eventually got a position at his old school in Minot, Maine

On August 15, 1975, in Rumford Point, Maine, he married Nancy Glover Marston and became the proud father of two: Shelly Marston and Michael Marston. As of 2022, Matt and Nancy are living in Phippsburg, Maine.

In 1978, after another year of teaching and having different jobs and positions in the mobile home building industry in Oxford, Maine, Matt decided to use the GI Bill to attend Franklin Pierce Law School (now part of University of New Hampshire) in Concord N.H. After graduation in 1981, he practiced as an attorney for two years plus in Mechanic Falls, Maine (Heath and Brooks) but decided he would prefer teaching. He went on to teach law and English at various Maine colleges: Beal College in Brunswick, Maine, Midstate College in Auburn, Maine, and the University of Southern New Hampshire in Brunswick, Maine until his retirement in 2009.

Matt is proud of his time in the service. Although he understood why some chose not to enter the military, at the time he believed we were helping the people in South Vietnam and also stopping the spread of Communism. He felt it was his duty to serve, and he did.

