

## EAST FISHKILL HOMETOWN HERO

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# James Reynolds

By Lauren Fitzgerald



In November 1965, 15 months after his mandatory pre-draft physical, James Reynolds wasn't surprised to receive his draft notice. The surprise, however, was his Dec. 21 report date. Jim and four others from his hometown of Deposit, N.Y., would have to celebrate Christmas early.

Jim had graduated the year prior and had met his future wife Cathy, a Long Island native, while she was visiting her cousin, Jim's childhood friend. A summer 1966 wedding was planned. A supermarket clerk at the time, Jim's aspirations of becoming a



James Reynolds served in the U.S. Army from 1965-1968.

Photos courtesy of Jim Reynolds

produce manager were cut short as he enlisted in the Army. They moved up the wedding to February, after the completion of Jim's basic training in Fort Dix, N.J. "When you're in the service, you can't do a lot of planning on your own," Jim reflects.

Next, Jim spent nine months in cryptographic repair training in Fort Monmouth, N.J. While home on a 30-day leave, again just before Christmas, Jim found it "very difficult" to break the news to his family, especially his mom, of his deployment to Vietnam.

As part of the 125th Signal Battalion 25th Infantry Division, he landed at Cu Chi, Vietnam, on Dec. 16, 1966. He provided cryptographic support to remote sites from a base that "stood little chance of being overrun," though "the Vietcong probed the perimeter with rockets and mortars," he explains. After a year, Jim returned to the U.S. as a Specialist E-5 with a Bronze Star and six other medals.

Jim's next assignment took him to Fort Huachuca, Ariz., in the 11th Signal Brigade. Then in April 1968, he was sent to Washington, D.C., to help restore communications during the riots after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

In October, the Reynolds' first daughter, Teresa, was born. Jim's enlistment ended that December, and the family



Jim preparing to travel via convoy from Cu Chi to Tay Ninh, Vietnam.



Jim sometimes drove this "deuce and a half," a tactical cargo truck that could carry 2½ tons of materials.

relocated to Rockland County, where Jim used the GI Bill to earn a business administration degree while working for AT&T. Their second daughter, Christine, arrived Christmas morning of 1971.

After discovering Hopewell Junction while visiting a friend, the family moved here in 1976. Jim commuted to White Plains until his retirement in 1998, the same year he joined East Fishkill's American Legion Manny Bacon Post 1758. Cathy also retired (from the Wappingers Central School District after 33 years) but still works part-time for the Wappingers Congress of Teachers.

Now its Commander, Jim enjoys "being with people who have experienced similar things and the camaraderie" of the Legion's many volunteer activities, including Memorial Day, Veterans Day and 9/11 ceremonies, Community Day and flag installations. Jim is also a member of the Disabled American Veteran Chapter 144, VFW Post 666, Vietnam Veterans of American Chapter 869, and the East Fishkill Veterans Committee. He likes to "get out and do things" (sometimes in his 1966 Mustang!), though it is clear his joy comes from doing things for others. Besides all he does for Veterans and the Legion, he also volunteers with the Hopewell Depot Museum and delivers meals for the Dutchess County Office of the Aging. So grateful are we for your service. ♦