

Darrel Ray Pearson

Captain, US Army, 1968 - 1972

CONTRIBUTED BY: ANGELA PEARSON KENNEDY, DAUGHTER

I am Angela Manon Pearson Kennedy, daughter of Darrell Ray Pearson. I purchased the brick in honor of my daddy and his service to the United States. We attended the Veterans Appreciation Ceremony in 2019 because my daughter was a member of the Pike Road High School Choral and they performed at the ceremony. My daddy attended to support his granddaughter and the choir. He and my mother really enjoyed the ceremony. He was interviewed for a video last year and was recognized with a medal. We thought it would be something he and my mother, Linda Pearson, would enjoy and appreciate. We purchased the brick in 2020.

Darrell Ray Pearson was born in 1945 in Brunswick, GA. His father, Henry Pearson Jr., was a returning soldier from World War II and his mother, Immogene worked in the factories supporting the war. The family moved to Jacksonville, FL after the war where they lived in housing built for the soldiers returning.

He attended first grade at Grand Park Elementary in Jacksonville. Due to the number of students and the growth in the area, a new school was built closer to his home named Biltmore Elementary. He attended second through sixth grade at Biltmore. He then attended Paxton Junior High school in the 7th through 9th grade. Darrell attended Paxton Senior High School in the 10-12 grades. He was a member of the Paxton High Band where he played the clarinet. He played in the band from 5th grade through the 11th grade. He was dismissed from band due to telling the band director off and regrets that decision. His senior year he was on the Paxton Varsity tennis team. Darrell attended Junior College at St. John's River Jr. College in Palatka, FL. He then attended Florida State University where he graduated with a B.S. degree in Secondary Education Social Studies.



Darrell married Linda Glenn on August 5, 1967. They had met in high school in Jacksonville, FL. Darrell was teaching 9th grade civics when he received a letter stating he had been drafted. This was late February 1968. His principal contacted the draft board and was able to delay his induction into the Army until the end of the school year. Darrell looked into joining the Navy and the Air Force. They both were looking for pilots. However, Darrell was unable to pass the eye exam. He then decided to try and become an officer in the Army. The delay allowed him to test and he scored high enough. (Cont'd on following page.)

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Darrell began his Army service at Fort Dix in New Jersey on August 7, 1968. After basic training he was sent to Fort Polk, LA where he took a Leadership Program while waiting to start Advanced Infantry Training. After completing AIT he was sent to Fort Benning, GA for Officer Candidate School. Darrell received the National Defense Service Medal, Expert Rifle for the M16 and Good Conduct Medal. After completion of Officer Candidate School he was promoted to 2nd Lieutenant in January 1969. He then was transferred to Fort Bliss, TX where he trained as a Red Eye Officer. The Redeye is a shoulder fired service to air guided missile.

After training, Darrell was assigned to McKee Barracks in Crailsheim Germany. This was an accompany tour and Linda was able to go with him. They were assigned a two bedroom apartment in the High Rise Building, a three story apartment barrack on base. While in Germany, Darrell experienced his first snow. They arrived in November of 1968 and just before Thanksgiving they awoke to 2 ½ feet of snow. That was the first time the South Georgia-Florida boy had ever seen snow and this was a lot of snow.

While at Crailsheim, Darrell was able to go to demolition school. He got to learn how to blow stuff up and that was fun. Also, he was promoted to 1st Lieutenant and assigned as the Supply Property Book Officer for the 51st Infantry Battalion. Darrell had a couple of young soldiers that could not get promoted because they had not finished high school. Having been a school teacher, Darrell encouraged the soldiers to attend night school and get their diploma. They both did and graduated. They both got their promotion after graduation.

Darrell and Linda had several friends in Germany, Art Atkins and his wife Trudy were their closest friends. Art was a great story teller and could make anyone laugh. However, while in Germany, Art found out he had a fatal disease, Art and Trudy left the Army. Not long after Art died. However, they continue to be friends with Trudy who lives in Houston, TX.

While living in Crailsheim Germany, Darrell and Linda decided to try and adopt. They went to the adoption agency in Crailsheim and filled out the paper work. However, they learned that if a German citizen applied they would be added above the Pearsons on the list. Darrell and Linda worked with a liaison on the Army Post that helped them with the paper work since it was in German and followed German law. The liaison provided them with tips to help them and advised them to visit orphanages in the area. So they visited several. While Darrell was in Turkey on a NATO Exercise he got a letter from Linda telling him she had found a baby that was available. In the letter she advised that if he agreed, she would start the paperwork. So, Linda started the paperwork, cleaned out the second bedroom, and started getting ready to bring home the baby. This was October 1970. She delayed picking up the baby until Darrell arrived. Darrell returned from Turkey on October 29, 1970 and the next day they went to the orphanage and picked up the baby girl. They brought her back to the apartment on base in Crailsheim. They named the baby, Angela Manon Pearson.

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Darrell was then transferred to Fort Leonard Wood, MO where he became the Training Officer for the Basic Training Company. While there he was promoted to Captain. Darrell began applying to a couple of colleges in anticipation of completing his service. He was scheduled to go to Oakland, CA where he then would have gone to Vietnam. However, the United States began decreasing the number of officers. Darrell received a letter stating he was going to be discharged early. He was very glad to get this letter. This was January 1972. He was discharged 5 days before he would have left for Oakland in March 1972.

Darrell and Linda moved to Valdosta, GA where he had been accepted to Valdosta College. They had a friend that lived in Valdosta that had encouraged them to move there. Also, it was only about 2 ½ hours from Jacksonville, Florida where they were from. He used his GI Bill to get his Master's Degree in Special Education in Emotionally Conflicted. Linda was able to get on with the Telephone Company and Darrell taught school in Valdosta, GA. In addition he used his GI Bill to buy their first house.

Darrell states that his biggest adjustment after the Army was; “Now I was in charge of my own schedule instead of the Army. That took some adjustment.”

Darrell shared that the Army helped him learn that when you need to be strong you can be strong. He also learned that if you set your mind to something you can be successful.

Darrell believes the military can be both beneficial to the United States, and also to the individual.

One funny memory Darrell shared was during Basic Training. He and several of the guys were caught with food and candy in the barracks. The sergeant poured the candy and cookies into the floor and took an electric buffer to the floor. He and the rest of the guys spent the rest of the night cleaning the floor and re-waxing it. He also stated that there were many times he and others would fall asleep while standing in formation from being so tired from the training.



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