

In 2015, LeRoy Kienast sat down with me to go over his military story. He also brought along a number of pictures for me to scan.

I used a digital audio recorder during the interview and then after he left I transcribed the information. Next I put it in a very rough draft and then sent him a copy.

I also went through all of his documents and newspaper clippings and discovered more details and time-lines for his service.

I need to work with LeRoy in person one more time to combine his interview information with the other data I gleaned through because I have run into some discrepancies with dates and locations.

While I could just use his interview and leave it at that, I think the extra information from the documents and clippings adds to his story.

For now I'll show both sources in separate stories. I think it might be interesting and informative to the reader to see the various ways I get to a final military story for a Veteran.

While I won't be using some of the first part of LeRoy's story in the Veterans' book (the non-military stuff), I want to feature it here to show how I like to also gather some information about the Veteran before they entered military service.

**#52 LeRoy Kienast (several pictures, working on a combined detailed write-up)**



**LeRoy Carl Kienast**

LeRoy's family roots go back to the late 1880s in the Manning area. His paternal grandparents were August and Barbara (Ullerich) Kienast, and his maternal grandparents were August and Henrietta (Gruhn) Braun.

LeRoy's parents were John and Emma (Braun) Kienast. He had five brothers: Gilbert, Harvey, Elmer, Maynard, and Leland.

LeRoy grew up four miles south of Manning on the west side of Airport road (old Frank Hell farm) and helped on the family farm. Milking was the main chore for Maynard, Leland, and LeRoy, which started at 5:00. They milked 30 cows by hand - separated the milk and cream.



*Gray School - Back: Maynard Kienast, John Davis, Billy Hansen, ??, LeRoy Kienast; Front: ??, ??, Bobby Hansen, ??, ??*

LeRoy first attended Gray School and then Lincoln No. 3 country school through eighth grade...He graduated from Manning High School in 1949.

LeRoy participated in football and basketball and was on the 1948 BB state championship team.

Teachers that he remembers at MHS: Coach and math teacher, Bill Steneker was one of his favorites. Other teachers were Bill Anderson who had served in the Navy during WWII and was assistant coach & PT instructor. His Math teacher, Arlene Edgington, gave LeRoy a stern warning that he wouldn't go very far if he didn't apply himself in the future. Myra Hamann taught Social Science and Joe McGrath taught English. Paul Johnson taught Voc Ag - LeRoy reflects that he was ornery and got kicked out of FFA.

After high school, LeRoy worked at Priebe, also for Ross Graner at Hi-Way Hatchery, and Dultmeier Manufacturing. On March 25, 1951, LeRoy married Donarae Strathman; fondly remembering that Leland & Genelle Kienast played match-maker. Donarae graduated from Manning High School in 1950.



*Manning High School: Russell Mohr, Marian Kasperbauer, Iva Mohr, LeRoy Kienast*

LeRoy was drafted on December 10, 1952, in Audubon, and then went to Des Moines for his induction and volunteered for the Marine Corps.

On January 10, 1952, LeRoy boarded a train and headed to Los Angeles, and from there he took a bus to the San Diego Recruit Depot for his boot camp training.

After basic training he was sent to Fort Benning, Georgia, where he took automotive classes from April 24, 1952, through July 8, 1952.

Next he was sent to Fort Knox, Kentucky, for heavy equipment and tank schooling from July 11, 1952, through September 24, 1952.

LeRoy then received orders for Camp Pendleton, and was assigned to the Third Tank Battalion Headquarters and Service Company where he worked on tank maintenance for four months. He had some challenges here because the company commander preferred Marine Regulars instead of reservists so LeRoy was moved around within the camp several times. They tried to convince him to change from reservist to regular military but he refused so they transferred him to another company in Camp Pendleton where he was involved with Anti-tanks... here, LeRoy trained with bazookas. Next he was transferred to another company...a ground unit.

LeRoy's time was nearing the end, when he received orders to go to Korea in July 1953. While on the ship USS Montrose APA troop transport and nearly to Hawaii, the Armistice was signed with Korea so the ship turned around and headed back to the US.

Back at Camp Pendleton, LeRoy was assigned to a motor transport outfit since he was getting close to the end of his time served. He had three months left when he got orders to join the Occupational Forces in Okinawa/Japan. These forces were based in Okinawa in case tensions arose in North Korea and the US forces were needed in South Korea.

LeRoy approached military officials and reasoned with them that they would send him over and then have to turn around and send him back home in a few months. LeRoy asked if he could be transferred to an ammunition depot in Nebraska, which was approved, but then his orders changed and he was assigned to LTA (lighter than air) helicopter base in Tustin, California, for guard duty.

LeRoy's base pay was \$78 per month and his wife was given an allotment of \$45. Medical services were free - including his daughter who was born on base.

LeRoy was discharged at El Toro Marine Corps Air Station near Santa Ana, California, on January 9, 1954, as a Corporal. He received the National Defense Service Medal.

LeRoy and his family returned to Manning after his discharge and then relocated to Long Beach in 1954 where they continued to live.

During LeRoy's time in the military, when someone was drafted, they were considered an 8 year obligor - 2 years active duty with 6 years inactive reserve. So upon release, LeRoy reenlisted in the Reserve Program and then in the fall of 1956 LeRoy began his Active Reserve stint and served until 1982; receiving the final rank of E-9 Sergeant Major (highest rank achievable in active reserves).

During his time in Active Reserves, LeRoy was notified about possible activation of his unit during the Los Angeles riots and the Cuban Missile crisis but they were never called.

LeRoy (middle below) received his discharge from Colonel Finn in January 1982 at El Toro near Santa Ana, California.



After retiring from the Marine reserves in 1982 LeRoy became a high school official for football, basketball, girls' softball, and 8 years of college softball after attending a professional umpire school to get his certification. During the summer he also officiated recreational ball for men's leagues.

**Family life:** LeRoy and Donarae's first daughter, Penny, was born at the Naval Hospital in Camp Pendleton. Both Penny and her younger brother, Ricky, attended Lutheran Church School, Hill Junior High, and graduated from Wilson High School in Long Beach. Penny went into the medical field for 12 years and later as a school teacher for 22 years at Susanville, California - she retired in 2015.

The Kienast's second daughter Pamela Jo died from Spina bifida - she lived from February to August of 1954.

Their son Ricky was born in Long Beach Community Hospital. He played baseball in junior college, where they won the state championship in 1976.

He then received a scholarship for baseball at Southern Utah State where he played for 2 years, graduating in 1979.

After his discharge, LeRoy started working for Standard Oil, then went to Harvey Aluminum where they made missile parts. From there he went to work for Shell Chemical (Torrance, California) in April 1955 and stayed there for 17 years until the plant was closed. He then transferred to Shell Oil refinery Company in Carson, California, where worked for 17 more years. They always lived in Long Beach.

Donarae passed away on October 25, 2012, and LeRoy now lives with his son, in Long Beach in the same home they have lived in since 1956. He enjoys making trips back the Manning to visit with friends and relatives.

*Information about the picture below: Chinook helicopter - medium duty helicopter - could carry a jeep*

*Carried paratroopers for jumping missions.*

*The Chinooks also pulled drones on a long cable for fighter jet pilots to train hitting with their guns.*

*First Sergeant LeRoy Kienast front row #9 holding papers. He spent 5 years with this squadron.*

*There were 12 Chinooks in this squadron, 120 enlisted men, 30 officers*

*LeRoy was in charge of enlisted men - supply, maintenance, etc and did roll call, inspections, meetings and he worked with their COs on the personal problems with the men.*

*For weekend duty they would meet on Friday night and go over the*



*assignments for Saturday and Sunday. This squadron assisted the regular Marines in moving their men during their training missions.*

*During the two-week summer duty the 764 would go to Twenty Nine Palms California, Cherry Point North Carolina, and Camp Lejeune North Carolina.*

*They would carry troops from aircraft carriers to these bases.*

*The pilots were fully qualified - many of them were airline pilots during their civilian life.*



LeRoy Kienast (above) took command of HMM-764 (helicopter squadron) July 1974 from Sergeant Major Wailack

First sergeant LeRoy Kienast served 10 years with MASS-4 prior to his transfer to the helicopter squadron HMM 764 last November 1974

He was motor transport chief for Marine Air Support Squadron-4. As MT chief, his duties centered around supervision of personnel dealing with operation and maintenance of wheeled equipment.

**Fallon Eagle Standard**

**Tuesday, July 26, 1977**

**Marine reserves here**

**By MSgt. C. Cash, USMCR**

Marine Air Reserve Medium Helicopter Squadron-764 arrived at NAS Fallon this past weekend for two weeks training. The squadron is headquartered at the Marine Corps Air Station, Santa Ana, California.

Commanding Officer Major John F. Cronin, with a troop strength of 28 officers and 82 enlisted Marine Air Reserves, will use the excellent weather conditions that the Nevada desert offers to log a maximum number of flight hours.

This year's active duty stint at the Naval Air Station at Fallon, Nevada, will mark the first time LeRoy has trained with a squadron involved in flight operations.



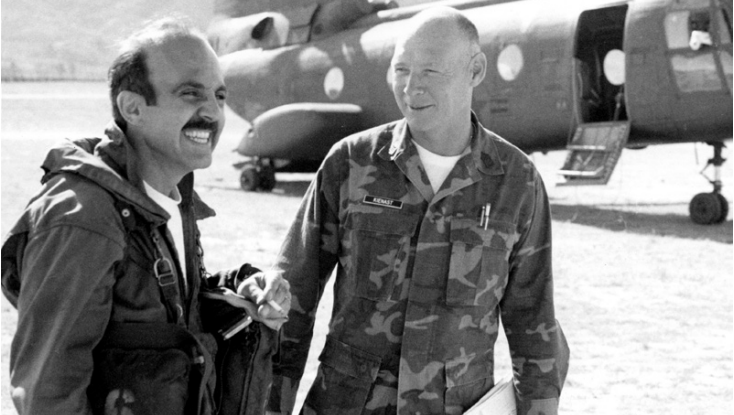
*ATD (Active training duty) 1979 New River, North Carolina  
Master Sergeant Bradley, Sergeant Major LeRoy Kienast, Master Gunnery Sergeant Singer*



*LeRoy Kienast relieves Sergeant Major Romans of Marine Air Group 46 August 1980.*

*As Sergeant Major, LeRoy Kienast was in charge of Marine Air-group 46, with 7 squadrons, consisting of 1500 enlisted men, and 25 aircraft (jets & helicopters).*

On March 13, 1981, Marine Air Reserve Sergeant Major LeRoy C. Kienast visited with Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron-764 upon being designated as the group sergeant major at Naval Air Station in Fallon, Nevada.



*Flight Jacket magazine - page 4 March 13, 1981*

*LAUGHING MATTER - Marine Air Reserve Sergeant Major LeRoy C. Kienast (right) exchanges jokes with former squadron mate Gunnery Sergeant John H. Varian. The Sergeant Major visited with Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron-764 upon being designated as the group sergeant major. Taken at Naval Air Station in Fallon, Nevada.*

**More Kienast on page 2**