

Don Buell

EBVN New London Site Lead



WHY DOES THE EB VETERANS NETWORK MATTER TO YOU?

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THE EBVN MATTERS TO ME BECAUSE MANY VETERANS, AFTER LEAVING THE MILITARY, FALL INTO A DEEP DEPRESSION AND HAVE A HARD TIME TRANSITIONING BACK TO CIVILIAN LIFE. THE TRANSITION CAN BE TOUGH, AND I WANT TO HELP.

IT'S OKAY TO BE UNCOMFORTABLE AND FEEL FRUSTRATED WHEN THOSE ORDERS YOU USED TO BARK ARE NOT MET WITH THE SAME MOTIVATION AS WHEN ACTIVE. ACTIVE-DUTY PERSONNEL AND VETERANS HAVE A UNIQUE MILITARY BEARING DRILLED INTO US, AND FOR SOME OF US, WE MAY NEVER REALLY SHAKE IT. THAT IS OKAY! LET US LEARN FROM EACH OTHER AND MAKE EB AN EVEN BETTER PLACE FOR ALL. LET THE EB VETERANS NETWORK MATTER.

 Electric Boat Veterans Network

Who is Don Buell?

I'm currently the co-site lead for EBVN New London.

I joined the Army Aviation in 1983 right after high school. After receiving some tough training plus a two-week stay in the post hospital ICU for pneumonia, I eventually graduated as an Observation Scout Helicopter Repairer from Fort Rucker, Alabama. After graduation I became a member of the 2nd ACR (2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment), Charlie Company, and was a part of a team responsible for patrolling and providing border security along the Iron Curtain. Our unit also provided security for 375 km along the East German, West German and Czechoslovakian borders. I also patrolled and monitored areas of the Fulda Gap. I served as Aerial Surveillance and as Crew Chief for the Squadron Commander. While perfecting some of my military skills and "being all I can be," I took a nasty fall from a cliff and landed myself in the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center ICU for the remainder of my tour in Germany.

Before returning to the United States in 1985 and while still recovering, I was escorted to the UK where I met up with my beloved Chester Fife & Drum Corps that became the first American

Drum Corps to perform in the Scottish Highland Gathering/Games. Ultimately, I had the honor of being one of the first two uniformed U.S. soldiers to participate in this event. I was so excited, I marched the entire parade in a full-body cast while drumming!

Upon my returning to the United States, I was reassigned to the 101st Airborne Division as the Company Clerk for Charlie Company, 229th Attack Helicopter Battalion "WIDOWMAKERS," stationed at Fort Campbell, Kentucky. On the morning of Thursday, December 12, 1985, we lost many friends and fellow soldiers to a plane crash while in route from Gander Newfoundland to Fort Campbell for the holidays. During this tour of duty my time as Company Clerk was instrumental for the transition from the 229th to the newly-formed 309th Attack Helicopter Battalion.

As a result of the many long surgeries, hospitalizations and convalescent time following my injuries sustained in Germany, I was retired in 1987 as a Disabled Veteran. Although my military career was cut short, I was proud to have served. Between my grandfathers, uncles, father and sister, our combined service to this great country is approximately 100 years.

Why do you like working at Electric Boat?

As a child looking down off the Thames Bridge, I have always thought submarines were cool. At the age of five my father carried me onboard the USS Casimir Pulaski (SSBN 633) when they returned to Groton after a long mission. I remember the crew holding me upside down grabbing my legs and lowering me down the hatch. Once inside, I was overwhelmed with all of the buttons and gauges. My father took me into the radio room and explained what he did in that tiny room when he was not at home. I remember thinking to myself, "you really got to be somebody special to be in one of these things."

After my stint with the Army, many small jobs and being vocationally rehabilitated, I applied to Electric Boat in June of 2008 as a Draftsman Learner. Since my start, I have been lucky to participate in many projects ranging from Advance Release and helping with the Naval History Reports for the Navy's Moored Training Ships, to tracking VREQs, VIRs and VPARS for the S.A.S. program and expediting specific items holding up production. I genuinely appreciate the opportunities Electric Boat has given me through the years and enjoy working with the many great people including my fellow veterans and active-duty personnel.

Why does the EB Veterans Network (EBVN) matter to you?

The EBVN matters to me because many veterans, after leaving the military, fall into deep depression and have a hard time transitioning back to civilian life. Responsibilities expected as a civilian may not feel as equal to those missions endured while in the military, even though these new responsibilities are just as important. The transition can be tough, and I want to help. It is okay to be uncomfortable and feel frustrated when those orders you used to bark are not met with the same motivation as when active. Active-duty personnel and veterans have a unique military bearing drilled into us, and for some of us, we may never really shake it. That is

okay! Let us learn from each other and make EB an even better place for all. Let the EB Veterans Network (EBVN) matter.