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Silas L. Copeland

Sergeant Major of the Army

SILAS LEE COPELAND, 81, of Huntsville passed away Dec. 4, 2001 in Conroe. He was born April 2, 1920 in Embryfield. He was a US Army Veteran. Sgt. Major that served in WWII, Korea, and Vietnam, retired after 31 years. He left behind his wife Ann Copeland, Daughter Dot Willis, son & wife, Russell & Susan Copeland, daughter and her husband Paula & Greg Itnyre, daughter-in-law Karen M. Copeland, six grand sons and one great-grand daughter.

Command Sergeant Major Silas L. Copeland was selected to the new Sergeant Major of the U. S. Army in 1970, a spokesman of the Pentagon said Embryfield was not listed in the Texas Almanac of in the U. S. Postal Guide.

However, ~~A~~ Army records show the sergeant was born in Embryfield, and that's all they know about it. (Iva Aden Blalock)

Copeland spent 31 years in the Army, serving in World War II and the Korean and Vietnam wars. He was the Army's highest noncommissioned officer from 1970 until his retirement in 1973. As the third soldier to hold the rank of sergeant major of the Army, Copeland advised the Army chief of staff on all enlisted personnel matters, including training and quality of life. As Sergeant Major of the Army, Copeland served as the Army Chief of

staff's personal advisor on all enlisted-related matters impacting soldier training and quality of life. Sergeants major of the Army typically spend the majority of their time traveling throughout the Army and sit on a variety of councils and boards that make decisions impacting soldiers, families, veterans and retirees.

Copeland shared his experience and his time with his soldiers, his friends and his family. In a December 6 Army press releases, SMA Jack L. Tilley was quoted saying,

"Copeland was a leader in both peace and war. Part of his legacy was his focus on training and taking care of troops. He was proud of our Army."

In the same press release, Tilley also praised Copeland's wife, Ann, who traveled extensively to check on soldiers' families all over the world during her husband's tour as sergeant major of the Army.

"She worked tirelessly to make quality of life and make military life more attractive. She continued to work on behalf of soldiers long after her husband's retirement,"

According to Military biography of Silas L. Copeland, " After serving at various posts in CONUS, he was sent overseas in January 1945 and assigned to Company E, 66th Armored Regiment, 2d Armored Division, as a Tank Commander and later a Tank Platoon Sergeant. In 1950 he joined the 2d Battalion, 8th

Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, then located in Japan. From 1951-1953, he was assigned to Senior ROTC duty at Texas, A&M University. Selected to be the division sergeant major in June 1963, he remained in that position until December 1966 when he was transferred to the 4th Armored Division in Germany. He was chosen to be the division Command Sergeant Major in April 1968 and served in that capacity until July 1969 when he was assigned to the Republic of Vietnam as the division Command Sergeant major of the 1st Infantry Division (Big Red One). Sergeant Major Copeland's awards and decorations include the Distinguished Service Medal, Legion of Merit, Bronze Star Medal with V Device (with Oak Leaf Clusters), Meritorious Service Medal, Distinguished Flying Medal, Distinguished Flying Cross, Air Medal, Army Commendation Medal (with Oak Leaf Cluster), Good Conduct Medal, American Campaign Medal, European Campaign Medal, World War II Victory Medal, Army of Occupation Medal (Germany), National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, United Nations Korean Service Medal, Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal, and the Combat Infantryman Badge". (NCO Journal)

Two basic drill formations for foot troops have been used from the end of the Middle Ages to the present: the column, for marching from one place to another and the line, for combat. Most drill movements are based on these two formations or on shifting from one to the other. In a column, the infantry

usually marches three or four abreast. It is chiefly used for moving foot troops on roads. Wider columns are used primarily for ceremonial purposes.

The large weapons known as artillery are used by ground forces or mounted on aircraft and ships. They include four main types of weapons: large guns, mortars, howitzers, and rocket launchers. Large guns, mortars, and howitzers are types of cannons.

A gun is cannon that fires projectiles from a long tube (known as the barrel) at high velocity in a low, flat trajectory. Some guns use ammunition that can pierce armor. Guns are widely used on warships, armored combat vehicles, and tanks. The first artillery guns fired simple projectiles that did not explode. Later guns fired ammunition that released shards of metal, called shrapnel, in the air. These early guns were loaded from the front (known as the muzzle) of the barrel. Modern guns are loaded from the side, which increases the speed and ease by which they may be fired.

A mortar is cannon that fires projectiles, called shells, in a high, arcing trajectory. This trajectory allows the shells to travel over obstacles to hit a target. Shells are loaded through the muzzle into a short barrel. Like guns, the first mortars fired shells that did not explode. Later mortars fired shells filled with gunpowder. These shells

had fuses and could be set to explode on impact, or just before they hit the ground. Mortar shells may also release shrapnel. The howitzer is designed to shoot explosive shells toward distant targets in high, arcing trajectories. Tracks are required to propel some howitzers with larger artillery mounts such as this one, a 203 mm M-110.

Rocket launchers guide the takeoff of missiles, which are propelled through the air toward a target. Missiles can travel vast distances and hit targets with great accuracy. There are two main types of missiles: unguided and guided. Unguided missiles, sometimes called rockets, are aimed by a rocket launcher at a specific trajectory. Guided missiles have special equipment that leads them to a target after they have been launched.

Rocket launchers were not widely used until World War II (1939-1945). Modern missiles can be fired in rapid succession from multiple rocket launchers. These missiles may be armed with a nuclear warhead.

Current trends in military education reflect rapid changes brought about by technological innovation and are geared to national security requirements. Recent curricular changes at the service academies have emphasized the humanities and the social and behavioral sciences in addition to reinforcing the curriculum in physical and applied sciences. Advanced courses

taken at civilian colleges and universities play a major role in supplementing the educational experience of selected personnel (primarily officers). Integration of women into the service academies, begun in 1976, reflects the personnel needs of the armed forces and also provides added service opportunities for women.

Although academy graduates have a 5- to 6-year service obligation, depending upon the academy and year of entry, the majority complete between 20 to 30 years of service. Many, on fulfilling their mandatory obligations or on retiring from the services, embark on civilian careers in management or in professions requiring the skills acquired in the services.

WORK CITED

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Military biography Silas L. Copeland - *Former Sergeant Major of the Army*, NCO Journal, and Silas L. Copeland's bio go to

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