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In Honor of All U.S. Veterans, WTO Vets Share Military Experiences

News
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DENVER: Originally, November 11th was proclaimed by the United States Congress as a day to be dedicated to the cause of world peace, and specifically set aside to honor veterans of World War I. In 1954, Congress amended the Act of 1938 to make November 11th a day to honor American veterans of all wars. Today, Veterans' Day is commonly observed in honor of all veterans of military service, whether or not they served during war time. Regardless of political persuasion, there is a pervasive sentiment across the country that we are all indebted to those among us who have chosen to express their sense of patriotism and duty to their fellow citizens through military service.

The Denver-based civil litigation firm Wheeler Trigg O'Donnell LLP is especially grateful to the six lawyers and four staff who have given years of their lives to the military for the benefit of all of us. The six lawyers represent 24% of the firm's 25 partners. They are all highly ethical, disciplined, hardworking, and generous individuals - traits that were surely honed in the service.

These individuals share their military experiences below. We hope you find inspiration here to examine how you might pay forward the sacrifices of our veterans, however that may be

appropriate to you. For these brave men and one woman, their way of giving back was through the military. To them, and to all veterans, we say "thank you."

Following graduation from college in 1969, John Vaught enrolled in the United States Navy Officer Candidate School in Newport, Rhode Island where he was commissioned an ensign. After advanced training, including language instruction, John was sent to Vietnam with the Naval Advisory Group. John served as a Military Assistance Command advisor with a river boat squadron at the Intermediate Support Base Cho Moi on the Mekong River. With an all-Vietnamese crew, John operated a river patrol boat on the Mekong River and searched small boat traffic to stop the flow of weapons from Cambodia into the Mekong Delta. Following his war service, John became a lieutenant and served as a department head at the United States Naval Communications Station in Italy. There he provided communication support to Southern Europe, Northern Africa, the Mediterranean, and the Sixth Fleet, including communications support during the 1973 Yom Kippur War in Israel. After being discharged from the Navy in 1975, John earned a law degree. Today, John has a successful legal practice that involves complex commercial litigation matters, including the defense of class action litigation.

After graduating from the United States Military Academy at West Point in 1974, WTO partner **John Fitzpatrick** ("Fitz") served in the United States Army as an airborne ranger and an artillery officer. In the late 1970s, while serving in Berlin as an artillery liaison lieutenant attached to the British Allied Regiments, Fitz guarded Rudolf Hess at Spandau Prison. A talented concert pianist, Fitz played piano for 20 Russian generals and 30 American Generals, including General Al Haig, during the annual "Meeting at the Elbe River" in Potsdam, Germany. Fitz recalls making frequent reconnaissance "visits" to East Berlin in the 1970s, when the Berlin Wall still divided the city. Following graduation from

Notre Dame Law School in 1981, Fitz advanced from prosecutor to chief prosecutor at Fort Carson in Colorado Springs, Colorado. He also served in Seoul, Korea as the chief prosecutor for the Eighth Army Division. In 1986, Fitz graduated from the United States Army Judge Advocate General's School, then served in the Army's tort branch at the Pentagon for two years. In all, Fitz spent 14 years in active military duty. Since returning to civilian life in 1988, Fitz has developed a national reputation as the "go-to" trial lawyer for high exposure cases, primarily in matters involving product liability, toxic torts, and medical malpractice. He has tried to verdict in excess of 175 cases in 22 states and obtained defense verdicts in well over 90% of them.

WTO partner **Kevin Kuhn** retired as a colonel from the United States Air Force Reserves in November 2006 after 29 years of military service. The son of a World War II fighter pilot and career Air Force officer, Kevin began his military service as an Army ROTC scholarship cadet during undergraduate school at the University of Oklahoma. When he elected to transfer to his father's branch of service following his college graduation in 1974, Kevin was commissioned as an Air Force second lieutenant. After graduating from the University of Oklahoma College of Law in 1977, Kevin spent four years as an active duty Air Force prosecutor, followed by 25 years in the Air Force Reserve Judge Advocate General's Corps. Throughout his reservist career, he taught trial advocacy courses and legal and judicial ethics to military lawyers and judges around the country. As a civilian trial lawyer, Kevin primarily handles personal injury matters, product liability cases, medical malpractice, and other professional liability matters. He has tried over 60 jury trials and over 50 bench trials and is a sought-after speaker for continuing legal and healthcare professional education. Mrs. Kevin (Peggy) Kuhn, also a former military officer, retired as a lieutenant colonel from the Army Nurse Corps after serving on active duty for seven years and on reserve duty for 17 years.

A 1984 graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point, WTO partner **James Hooper** continued a family tradition in which every male member of his family since the American Revolution has served in the Armed Forces of the United States. Following officer basic, airborne, and ranger training, Jim served as a tank platoon leader, scout platoon leader, executive officer, and troop commander of Troop C, First Squadron, Fourth Armored Cavalry of the First Infantry Division (Forward), patrolling the former East German and Czechoslovakian frontiers. Jim and his men completed a special tour with the Berlin Brigade, which allowed him to pass through "Checkpoint Charlie" and visit the former East Berlin, which he considers one of the most informative experiences of his life. Jim completed the Infantry Officer Advanced Course and served at Ft. Benning, Georgia before returning to civilian life and entering the University of Michigan Law School. He graduated in 1992. Following a clerkship with the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit and private practice with King & Spalding in Atlanta, Jim relocated to Colorado and became a WTO partner in 1998. Jim's practice concentrates on national representation of major pharmaceutical, medical device, and manufacturing companies in complex product liability litigation.

WTO partner and Lieutenant Colonel **Andrew "ACE" Efaw** has completed almost 20 years of service in the United States Army, ten years on active duty and ten years on reserve duty. After graduating in 1989 from the United States Military Academy at West Point as a field artillery officer, ACE became branch qualified as a civil affairs officer and served as an active-duty prosecutor for four years. ACE has degrees from the University of Pennsylvania Law School and the Judge Advocate General's School for Military Law. From 2004 to 2005, ACE was deployed on reserve duty as the senior defense counsel for Northern Iraq. As a JAG attorney, ACE tried dozens of criminal cases, both in the U.S. and in Iraq. Currently, ACE is a reserve military judge and presides over active duty courts-martial around the country. ACE, known as

Andy in civilian life, has a busy law practice focused on defending complex commercial, product liability, and franchise cases in federal and state courts. Mrs. Andrew (Amy) Efaw is also a West Point graduate and former Army officer.

The WTO staff members who served in the military include the following. Paralegal **David Meyer** served on active duty in the United States Air Force from 1985 to 1998, most extensively as a paralegal with the Judge Advocate General's Corps. He spent an additional three years in the Air National Guard. Legal secretary **Christine Keitlen** enlisted in the United States Army Reserves in 1990 and served as a medical specialist. She was honorably discharged in 2000.

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