

# Jacksonville-born soldier retires after more than 33 years of service

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SPRINGFIELD – After a 33-year military career spanning enlisted and officer service as well as both active duty Army and full-time National Guard service, Lt. Col. Charles 'Chuck' Kitson celebrated his retirement at the Illinois Military Academy on Camp Lincoln in Springfield, Ill. June 29, 2018.

Born and raised in Jacksonville, Kitson enlisted into the Army right out of high school in 1985 as a mechanic. His enlisted career lasted 12 years, including four years of active duty, tours in Germany and Fort Lewis, and a deployment supporting Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm with the 1244th Transportation Company after his transition to the Illinois Army National Guard.

Kitson said his transition from active life to Guard life was made easy by a good unit and good people, many of whom he remains friends with.

"I have had the pleasure of knowing Chuck since the early 90s and he has always been one of a handful of officers who I could rely on for sound advice and true friendship throughout my career," said Lieutenant Colonel Jeffary Jiannoni, Executive Officer of the 65th Troop Command.

Kitson said he realized he wanted to spend his career helping Soldiers soon after joining the Guard.

"After I went to , I came home and I just knew that doing the military thing was more my style, so I started applying for jobs and making a better life for my family," said Kitson.

Kitson's service as a full-time member of the Illinois National Guard spans more than 25 years and includes service in both the federal technician and Active Guard and Reserve programs. He commissioned in 1997.

"You have to be driven in order to become an officer. You have to be a leader, face scrutiny, and take the good with the bad. Someone always outranks you-being doesn't make you godlike. I felt my experiences as an enlisted person better prepared me to be an officer because I could relate to what I was asking my Soldiers to do," said Kitson.

Kitson said his two proudest moments in the military were achieving the ranks of Staff Sergeant and Lieutenant Colonel because both represented the culmination of years of hard work by both him and his family.

"The cool thing about the military is that they give you a map. If you do the right things, there's no reason you shouldn't get promoted. But I never did any of that by myself. My loving wife Judy and my kids supported me 100% of the time in that effort, as did my mentors. My accomplishments are not my own, they are the sum of what the people in my life have helped me accomplish," said Kitson.

Kitson says he will spend his post-Army years continuing to train and support National Guard Soldiers as the Senior Advisor for the National Guard Bureau's Mission Command Training Support Program. He is also a passionate road cyclist and the Director of Operations for The Gold Star Mission, an organization that works to ensure fallen Soldiers are never forgotten through efforts that include cycling to raise funds and create scholarships.