

SALUTE TO SERVICE

Veterans Day, 2013



Through the years, men and women answered the call to duty and donned a military uniform in support of their country. That willingness to serve is strong in the Alaska Department of Public Safety among both commissioned and non-commissioned people. There are numerous reasons why they chose to serve their country. Some wanted to serve their country, others joined to see the world or for money to pay for college. Others followed the path of family members before them or to spite a parent, while some were compelled after the attacks on the World Trade Center on Sept. 11. Some served in times of peace and others went to far-flung regions of the world to serve in support of a conflict. Regardless of the capacity served, if it was active duty, Guard or Reserves, whether it was as a soldier, sailor, airman, Marine or Coastie, this experience changed them. These are some of the stories provided by just a handful of the many veterans that work for DPS. These stories are a glimpse into past lives that have made them who they are today and has helped shaped our nation. Each year, Veterans Day gives us a great opportunity to thank those around us for serving their country. It also gives those who served, or are still serving, a chance to reflect on their memories of people they served with, things they accomplished and experiences they'll never forget.

- **PIO BETH IPSEN (U.S. AIR FORCE 90-94/RESERVES 94-98)**

STUART KIRKSEY

Alaska State Trooper since 2011
U.S. Marine Corps (1993-1997)
U.S. Marine Reserves (1998-1999) (2006-2008)
(pictured here on the right)



Kirksey and Phillips met in 1993 and literally served side by side in the same platoon in Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 4th Marine Expeditionary Unit at Camp Pendleton, Calif. "We were straight up 'grunts' or riflemen as it's properly called," Phillips said. The pair served together for four years, during which time they were attached to an amphibious readiness group and sailed from Camp Pendleton across the Pacific Ocean several times to the Persian Gulf and Somalia to "put out fires" as Phillips described it. "Everything was a show of force back then." They were a part of an operation to move the U.S. Liaison Office from Mogadishu, Somalia to Nairobi, Kenya in 1994. The pair was in the same Chinook CH-46 that flew around in circles, waiting to jump in and help if the situation escalated. Luckily, it never did. After serving in the same platoon for about two years, the company underwent a restructuring and they were placed in different squads. But that didn't prove to be the end of the working relationship or friendship. "One of the cute nicknames we've acquired over the years is 'peas and carrots' as Forrest Gump was called with his friend Bubba," Phillips said. Kirksey laughed at this and said, "Oh, I don't know about that." After they both left the Marine Corps, they started careers in ironwork construction in California. After a year of living in California, Kirksey, an Ala-

LEE PHILLIPS

Alaska State Trooper since 2009
U.S. Marine Corps (1993 - 1996)
(pictured here on the right)



bama native, returned to his home state and started working for his family's commercial metal roofing construction company. By then Kirksey was married to a gal that went to school with Phillips that he had met through his friend. In 2008, Phillips moved in next door to Kirksey in Alabama and started working for his friend at the family business. Meanwhile, Kirksey joined the USMC Reserves twice. He was a member of Lima Company, 3rd Battalion, 23rd Marines out of Montgomery, Ala. for a year, and then went back to the Reserves for two years with the 3rd Force Reconnaissance Company in Mobile, Ala. He was activated for the last six months of this duty and sent to Camp Lejeune as his company built up for a deployment to Iraq. However, his military obligation ended just prior to the overseas deployment. In 2009, Phillips left Alabama and became an Alaska State Trooper. Kirksey, who served as a reserve Alabama State Trooper, turned down a job to be an Arkansas State Trooper while he was waiting to test to become an Alaska State Trooper. "It was a gamble," he admitted. It paid off. He became a Trooper in 2011. He and Phillips both worked out of the Mat-Su Valley for a short time before Kirksey transferred to Delta Junction post in 2012. Phillips has since transferred to Talkeetna. "Although I'm posted in Talkeetna and he's posted in Delta, we still make time a few times a year to hunt and fish," Phillips said.