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A lifetime of service to the country

By MARIA BOILEAU — For The Express

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"I was a country boy with big, wide open eyes," Alan Heaton said with a laugh as he described the beginning of his military service in the U.S. Navy.

"It was the first time traveling by myself. I left from Williamsport Airport. At that age everything you see seems new... All kinds of fun things happen when you are away."

Alan Heaton entered the Navy on Oct. 10, 1974 and attended boot camp in the Great Lakes.

"I attended Navy A school in Port Hueneme, Calif., and at school they taught you your job. I was a Navy Seabee, a branch of the Navy that works in construction. It was a small group."

The Seabees are the Construction Battalions (CBs) of the Navy. The Seabees have a history of building bases, bulldozing and paving thousands of miles of roadway and airstrips, and accomplishing a myriad of other construction projects in a wide variety of military theatres dating back to World War II.

The official motto of the Seabees is "Construimus Batuimus" translated into English as "We Build, We Fight." The Seabees have several unofficial mottos as well. Their best known unofficial motto is the simple phrase "Can Do" featured on much of their promotional material.

At the beginning of 1975 there were three regiments, 10 mobile construction battalions, two amphibious construction battalions, two underwater construction teams and one construction battalion maintenance unit on active duty.

Heaton attended Bald Eagle-Nittany High School and graduated in 1974.

"I decided to join in high school," he said. "It was my first and only option. I was tired of school and I had always wanted to travel, so this was great to do just that.

"I never spent time on a ship... As a Seabee you work in land-based construction, as they say 'no billet for Seabees on ships.'"

Heaton said his family had no problem with his entrance into Navy. "I was on delayed entry and my family was very supportive."

Heaton's favorite location was Seattle, Wash.

"It was fantastic," he said. There is always something to do. It is very green and very pretty. I was stationed there from 1976 to 1978."

Heaton also spent time at Midway Island. "It is this little island just 40 miles from the International Date Line. You could go fishing and boating. It was a beach bum's life if you wanted it.

"I had a lot of fun and met a lot of people in those four years of active duty. I always found something to do... Wherever I was. I always found something to keep me interested."

As far as his construction skills today, Heaton laughs "I know enough to get in and get out of trouble."

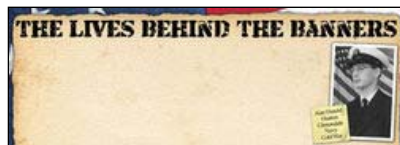
Discharged on Oct. 10, 1978, Heaton returned home. He attended Slippery Rock University as an elementary education major. "I changed to accounting and I really enjoyed it."

Heaton met his wife, Maureen, at Slippery Rock University. Both Heaton and his wife went to Youngstown State University, and he later received his MBA at the University of Texas at Arlington.

Heaton enlisted in the Naval Reserves at Atlantic City, N.J., and moved to Texas in 1984. He remained as a reservist with the Naval Mobile Construction Battalion Twenty-Two (NMCB 22), the Lone Star Battalion, until January 2001.

NMCB-22's mission is to provide and maintain a trained, ready and immediately available reserve battalion, meeting the requirements of the Naval Construction Force for employment as directed by the

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Chief of Naval Operations in the event of war, natural emergency or when otherwise authorized by law. The Lone Star Battalion is still one of the top reserve units in the nation and is composed of detachments in Texas, New Mexico and Oklahoma.

The Chief of Naval Operations has stated that much time, money and effort is spent to insure such a state of readiness. Training and preparing are the foremost and overriding priorities for NMCB-22 to insure the battalion is in the highest possible state of readiness in the event of mobilization or to meet any emergency.

"In the reserves, you serve on drill for a month, either two days or one weekend, and two weeks of active duty," he said. "I never thought I would be in the reserves for 25 years. But once a month I could put aside the accounting and do something different."

Serving in the reserves took Heaton all across the country, including Hawaii, New Orleans, South Carolina, California and Mississippi.

Recently home for his 35th high school class reunion, Heaton said, "I would never have guessed that I'd be in Texas for 25 years."

Heaton's father and brother were also part of the 2008 Hometown Hero Banner Program. His father, Harold Edgar Heaton, served in the Army during the Korean War and his brother, Wayne Edgar Heaton, served in the Army as a helicopter pilot. Alan Heaton also has a sister and his mother lives in Clintondale.

He works as a controller at Prestonwood Country Club in Dallas, Texas. He lives in Fort Worth, Texas, with his wife, Maureen. The couple has a daughter, Sarah, and two sons, Ian and Stephen. Ian served in the Navy for four years.

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Tonight in Prime Time

	8:00 PM	8:30 PM	9:00 PM	9:30 PM	10:00 PM	10:30 PM
	Shark Tank		Shaq Vs. HD, New		Primetime: Family Secrets HD, New	
	NCIS HD		Big Brother 11 Live			
	The Biggest Loser New, Video				The Jay Leno Show HD, New	
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