Jul 31, 2018 · 5 min read

Army Strong

Updated: Oct 20, 2018

“Look Sharp, Be Sharp, Go Army!”

That was the Army slogan when my dad started his military career back in 1962. He is my stepfather, and I only first met him when I was about 9 or 10 (I forget…), but for all intents and purposes, he is my father…and not just a father, but a dad as well.

He wanted a portrait made of him dressed up with his medals. He said it would be his “last” portrait. He was 74 at the time of this portrait (2013) , but looking at him you wouldn’t know it. He is full of energy and life. He has seen it all and done it all.

So I went over to my parents’ house. He had a banquet to attend later that evening, so I was hoping I could persuade him to go on base (Fort Lee, VA) early, and maybe I could get some shots of him at the Quartermaster museum where his photo and biography now reside, or perhaps at the banquet itself.

He didn’t want to do anything that extravagant, and just wanted a simple picture taken at the house.

Damn….

Now my parents have a full house. Full of furniture, awards and photos on the walls, etc. The only area of the house where I would remotely be able to setup was their upstairs living room.

Now this upstairs living room as a large window covered only by sliding blinds. Light was leaking through each blind. I did not want to shoot his portrait with blinds in the background…

I didn’t have any backgrounds with me (I don’t own any :-))….But I did have my large reflector. I took the outer shell off and duct taped it to the blinds.



You can see from the setup shot the light peaking in from the blinds. I had to move quite a bit of furniture around to have that cleared off area you can see in this shot. It wasn't much, but it was enough.

I used two Yongnuo 560 speedlites, each set to 1/2 power. I could have used a single speedlite on full power, but this way I was able to minimize recycle times.

The flashes were mounted together using my Phottix Multi-boom (I love that thing), and were paired with a 60″ reversible umbrella. Yes, the umbrella was collapsed like that during the shoot. It provided more direction and control, and faster light fall off than an open umbrella could provide. As Zack Arias calls it, it's a "poor man's softbox".

I used my Canon 5D II and 50L (what else). For a tight 1/2 length portrait shot with the 50L, I had to get in close. My reflector backing wasn't wide enough for me to step back and take the shot since the 50L's field of view was too wide. I didn't want to get the blinds in the shot and have to get rid of them in post production. I like only having to tweak my photos, not turn them into full blown projects. Get it right in camera (or at least as much as you possibly can).

Camera settings:

f/5.0
ISO 100
1/200 Shutter speed
flashes triggered with Pocket Wizard Plus X units.

The resulting shot. I wasn't a fan of the wrinkled background, but I had to make do with what I had, and it was certainly better than the alternative. As my wife said, it gives the background a little texture so he doesn't fade away into it. Sometimes….just sometimes she can be right.


PHILLIP WARD
PHOTOGRAPHY



For those of you interested in military careers, read on.

> Colonel Clint Hodder is recognized as one of the Quartermaster Corps first officers of his time to dedicate over half of his thirty year military career in research, development, standardization, acquisition, and international interoperability of weapon systems and equipment that enhanced the U.S. Army and its NATO allies during the Cold War era.

> He improved our Army's operational capabilities and saved millions of dollars in R+D. For this and much more, Colonel Hodder was made a charter member of the Army acquisitions Corps in 1990.

Born in Mt. Lebanon, Pennsylvania on 14 October 1939. As a distinguished military graduate of ROTC, he was commissioned a Regular Army Officer in the Quartermaster Corps in 1962. His first two years of service were as a Tank Platoon Leader in the 3rd Medium Tank Battalion, 33rd Armor, at Fort Knox Kentucky. Since 1964 he has served in numerous logistical, project management, and research and development assignments throughout his career.

From July 1964 to June 1966 he served as the Assistant Post Quartermaster in Kassel, Germany. In July 1966, he activated and assumed command of Headquarters Company, 26th General Support Group at Fort Lewis, Washington, and subsequently deployed the unit to Tuy Hoa, Republic of Vietnam, in December 1966. During his second tour of Vietnam from June 1970 to June 1971, he served as the Assistant Division Supply Officer, 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile). During his two tours of duty in Vietnam, he participated in four battle campaigns against the North Vietnamese Army.

He was an Assistant Professor of Military Science at the University of Pennsylvania from 1971 to 1973. From 1974 to 1978 he served in the Lance Missile Project Office, Redstone Arsenal, Alabama. He was selected to be an exchange officer in the British Army from 1978 to 1980. From 4 September 1980 to 24 June 1983, he commanded the 197th Support Battalion, 197th Infantry Brigade (separate), Fort Benning, Georgia. From 1984 to 1987, he served as the Group Commander and Senior Standardization Representative, U.S. Army Research and Standardized Group, United Kingdom. He commanded the U.S. Army Natick Research Development, and Engineering Center from 22 October 1987 to 22 September 1989. From September 1989 until his retirement from active military service on 1 July 1992, Colonel Hodder was Dean, School of Acquisition Management, and the 15th Commandant, U.S. Army Logistics Management College, Fort Lee, Virginia.

Colonel Hodder has a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from the University of Dayton, Master of Business Administration Degree from the University of Alabama, and is a graduate of the Naval War College, the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, the Defense Systems Management College, the U.S. Army Quartermaster Officer Advance Course, and the Armor Officer Basic Course.

His military decorations include the Legion of Merit (two oak leaf clusters), the Bronze Star Medal (one oak leaf cluster), the Meritorious Service Medal (three oak leaf clusters), the Air Medal, the Army Commendation Medal (two oak leaf clusters), and the Vietnam Honor Medal First Class. In addition to his military decorations, Colonel Hodder is a charter member of the Army Acquisition Corps, a distinguished member of the Quartermaster Regiment. He is also the recipient of the distinguished Order of St. Martins and a recipient of the General Hastings Award. He is also a 2013 inductee into the Army Quartermaster Hall of Fame.