

# Grand Island veteran reuniting with fellow National Guard Special Forces

**By Samantha Maziarz Christmann** / News Staff Reporter / @DiscountDivaSam  
on April 21, 2013 - 12:01 AM

Gen. Frank Brusino's lips curl into a sly smirk as he scans memories of his 45-year military career, choosing which tidbits to share. The Korean War veteran and Green Beret talks about things like the time he pulled a terrified soldier from the water after a particularly harrowing jump, and the day he mistook a White House phone call for a prank.

But when he talks about the "band of brothers" he served with all those years ago, the 82-year-old Grand Island resident has to stop for a minute and clear his throat.

"These men were all part of my life. They took care of me when I needed it," Brusino said. "I feel like I have a responsibility to them."

That's why he is bringing the remaining members of the 3rd battalion, 19th Special Forces of New York's National Guard to the Niagara Falls Air Base next week for a reunion featuring a candlelight vigil for the members that have been lost over the years to age, illness and injury. Brusino was commander of all special forces troops in the state of New York before the National Guard Special Forces was disbanded in 1996.

The returning soldiers will pause to remember men including Sgt. Frank Booth, a factory worker who broke his leg on a jump from an airplane and who died of cancer in a veteran's hospital; and Sgt. Michael Moscati, the owner of a plastics company who met the same eventual fate. Brusino personally recruited them both.

Like Brusino, who retired from civilian life as deputy supervisor of the Niagara Wheatfield school district, the special forces troops in the National Guard led full civilian lives. But they each thought they could do more, and felt a duty to serve their country.

Though the soldiers who will be remembered at the Air Base April 21 didn't die in battle, their service was monumental, Brusino said, and they deserve to be remembered.

"You'd be surprised how they stuck together," he said. "It was unbelievable."

The Army Special Forces troops known as Green Berets are trained for "unconventional warfare" in the manner of raids, ambushes, guerilla warfare, sabotage and subversion. They're taught to survive in extreme conditions and

are distinguished by their specialized foreign language training and air jump missions.

The Green Berets were immortalized in the 1966 chart-topper, “The Ballad of the Green Berets.”

“Fighting soldiers from the sky/Fearless men who jump and die/Men who mean just what they say/The brave men of the Green Beret,” goes the song.

But for Brusino and his men, bravery was an afterthought. Serving was just the right thing to do.

“I believe in the military,” Brusino said. “I believe a strong military is going to keep us safe. And we need this country to be safe.”