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ASHEBORO - When someone finds a job he truly loves, that person considers himself fortunate. When someone is able to find two positions that he thoroughly enjoys during his lifetime, that person is blessed.

Asheboro High School girls basketball coach Don Corry said he has been extremely fortunate and extremely blessed on and off the basketball court. Not only for the success he has earned on the basketball court - he captured his 700th career coaching victory Friday night - but for what he accomplished as a member of the U.S. Army, serving our country for 41 years.



Coach Corry and the Blue Comets following his 700th win as a head coach. Photo provided.

Corry has been living out his coaching dream while still a member of the U.S. Army Reserve for the majority of his 37-year coaching career. Now 73, he retired from the military as a Lieutenant Colonel just 13 years ago.

He speaks very proudly of both careers.

"I think I am very very blessed and lucky to have been able to do this," Corry said about coaching, but who could have been just as easily talking about his military career. "It's something I really enjoy doing. A lot of people don't get to do stuff they really enjoy. I wouldn't trade it for anything."

He graduated from Orville High School in California and had an opportunity to play basketball at BYU, but he said he didn't feel that was the right move at the time and instead worked at various jobs, including at a movie theater and a grocery store for the next year

"I really didn't know what I wanted to do and decided to go into the service," Corry said. That was 1966.

The discipline required in the Army was good for him, Corry said, and he ended up going to Vietnam. When he returned, he played Junior College basketball and, while still on active duty, went to Officer Candidate School.

He started his coaching career in 1982 at Leland Middle School in Brunswick County before moving to Cape Fear Academy in 1983 and then Trask Junior High School in Wilmington in 1986. In 1989, he accepted a position as the Hoggard High School girls varsity basketball coach and his run there, which lasted through the 1997 season, was exceptional. In his eight years, Hoggard was 21-7, 24-4, 25-3, 27-2, 25-2, 23-6, 29-1 and 28-1. In his final year, Hoggard was ranked ninth in the country in the USA Today poll.

Those years at Hoggard were some of his fondest in his long coaching career.

"Those girls at Hoggard wanted to play basketball all the time," Corry said. "I got a call on Christmas Day from one of the players, saying she wanted to shoot and asked if I could open the gym. When I got there, the whole team was there. They wanted to get after it."

Corry said he still stays in touch with a number of girls on that team and relayed the story of how one time he and his wife were in Winston-Salem at a restaurant and when he entered, he heard a loud "Coach Corry." It was then that a former player from Hoggard ran up and gave him a hug.

"Those are the times you remember," Corry said.

"One girl played at Carolina when they won the national championship," he said. "Her teammate was at N.C. State. They played against each other and guarded each other. I liked seeing that."

It was while at Hoggard that he went from active duty to the Army Reserve.

"At the time, I was pulling double-duty with coaching and the Army Reserve," Corry said. "I had been on active duty for so long. I was on active duty for 14 years and then stayed in the reserves. I wanted to go back to active duty, but the coaching just took off when I went to Hoggard."

"I wouldn't trade the military for anything," Corry added. "I've been to Hawaii, the Philippines, Japan, Guam, Germany, Scotland, England, Holland, Belgium, France. The Army was very good to me. I got into basketball and it just bit me."

It was then that Corry left the active duty roster and became a member of the Army Reserves. That allowed him to be at home more in order to watch his twin sons and daughter grow up. After his stint at Hoggard, where he also won a state golf championship in 1993, he went to Lexington High School to coach the boys basketball team.

"A lot of times, guys think they know more about the game," Corry said of his switch to boys. "It's harder to get them to be disciplined like the girls, especially some of those early teams. Hoggard teams were really disciplined and you get to Lexington and a lot of them thought they were superstars."

The players obviously got the message. Corry's Yellow Jackets made the state playoffs in five of his six seasons. He was 105-62, including the 2000-01 season during which he was named North Carolina AP Coach of the Year and took Lexington to the state final, where they lost to East Bladen.

He remained in the Army Reserve while coaching at Lexington High School, which turned out to be a six-year stint with the Yellow Jackets' boys program. He was also an assistant coach in football. His Army Reserve unit was in Kentucky, making for some awfully long weekends.

"On weekends we had duty, I would finish school on Friday (before the basketball season) and my wife and I would get in a car and drive all night to Kentucky," Corry remembered. "We would get there just in time for me to report and I would be there Saturday and Sunday and we would drive back in time to get to school on Monday."

Corry, who also coached golf, soccer and football during his career, guided Lexington into the 2001 state championship game, falling just short of a state title.

After departing Lexington in 2003, he coached Southwestern Randolph's girls for four years and Asheboro for three (2008-11). He was 56-27 with the Blue Comets, including a pair of conference tournament titles. Then he began another successful run, this time with the East Davidson girls.

Living in Lexington, the job at East Davidson made it a lot easier travel-wise for him. And with his wife the team's official scorekeeper, staying closer to home made her availability a little easier as well.

He was 175-48 at East Davidson and his 2015-16 team reached the 2-A state championship game, a tough 68-65 loss to North Pitt.

He stayed at East Davidson until the 2019-20 season and then retired - sort of.

He retired, but always said if the right job came open, he would consider returning to the

coaching ranks. It only took a few months to find the right job again.

"I needed to step away and clear my head," Corry said of leaving East Davidson. "I thought about going back to boys again, but the Asheboro girls job came up and I enjoyed myself the first time I was there. And I missed the game, I missed the results."

The Blue Comets are primed for a deep run in the playoffs. This year's AHS team, led by veteran Blue Comets Diamond McDowell, Tanaesha Ellison and Janiya Jackson and SWR transfer Ashton Maness, reminds Corry of his East Davidson team that made it to the state championship game.

"They are buying into what we need to do," Corry said about his current AHS girls. "I had a really, really good team at East Davidson that went to the state championship and this team is pretty close to that team as far as talent level."

And what about Friday night when a victory over rival Southwestern Randolph resulted in his 700th coaching win?

"I was more concerned with the girls getting that conference win than I was thinking about 700," Corry said. "Getting that win was the most important."

Team before self, no matter the circumstance. Another reason why Corry and his teams have been successful on and off the basketball court.