



CITY OF
STURGIS
SOUTH DAKOTA

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Bachand to be honored on Military Appreciation Day

STURGIS - Mike Bachand has led a varied and accomplished life as a military veteran, businessman, rancher, husband, father, grandfather, and city council member.

This year, he is being honored for his many contributions to his country and community during Military Appreciation Day at the 84th City of Sturgis Motorcycle Rally on Tuesday, Aug. 6.

Bachand was born and raised on a ranch near Bear Butte, just east of Sturgis. He attended a one-room schoolhouse located between his parents' and grandparents' homes, where he was one of seven students. In eighth grade, he moved to Sturgis for school and graduated from William J. Brown High School in 1973.

In the fall of 1973, Bachand enlisted in the Air Force and attended basic training at Lackland Air Force Base in Texas. The only other military member in his extended family was his grandmother's brother, Alphonse, who served as a combat soldier and officer during World War II. Alphonse's wartime stories left a lasting impression on him.

After basic training, Bachand was asked to list his areas of interest to determine his military occupational specialty and was then sent to Sheppard Air Force Base for further training. He initially signed up for telephone support but ended up in the teletype career field. This early technology, similar to the telegraph, used a hardwired typewriter to send encrypted messages.

“I think I signed up for telephone support, and somehow I got in the teletype career field,” he said. “That was the first big technology that the service had. That's the way the Air Force kind of communicated to all the missile bases in those early days.”

Bachand said that when he got to his first duty station, they were phasing out the encryption program. He and two other airmen were chosen to train with the Navy, who were among the first in the military to launch computer systems.

One of Bachand's most proud accomplishments is his role in developing the computer infrastructure and architecture for military support. Remarkably, the system he helped create is still in use today, albeit on a much larger scale, by the Army National Guard.

Bachand said he never felt daunted by developing computer systems.

“I didn't know any different. I was just this dumb ranch kid that was taught that everybody puts their boots on the same way, so you just met every challenge they put in front of you.”

Bachand returned to the ranch after his tour in the Air Force. He worked the ranch and at nearby Fort Meade VA Medical Center. He joined the South Dakota National Guard and attended and graduated with a degree in business from Black Hills State University.

He participated in the ROTC program at BHSU. Bachand admits he wanted to join the Rapid City unit because they were getting the first computer systems at the headquarters. He was selected to head up the computer fielding and training program for South Dakota Guard Units.

“I loved what I did and what I was because I was always challenged,” he said. Bachand retired in 2005 as a Lieutenant Colonel.

Additionally, Bachand has been active in the community where he owned the Camel Tent Corner which began in the mid-1980's, on the corner of 4th and Main Street, which helped start the downtown Rally expansion. This kickstart at that end of Main Street helped expand the Rally footprint and Rally activities.

He has also been active in the Meade County Extension Program and Farm Service Agency helping promote farming and ranching in rural Sturgis.

Bachand has served on the Sturgis City Council where he has held a seat for nine years.