

Biography: Lieutenant General Robert L. “Sam” Wetzel

General Wetzel was born in Clarksburg, West Virginia on 6 October 1930. He graduated from the US Military Academy at West Point, NY on 3 June 1952 with a B.S. in Engineering and was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant of Infantry. He also has a Master of Science in Business Administration from The George Washington University.

Sam Wetzel fought in the Korean War as an Infantry Platoon Leader and Company Commander in the 279th Infantry Regiment, 45th Infantry Division. In Vietnam he commanded the 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, 196th Infantry Brigade, Americal Division. He later commanded the 1st Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, Fort Carson Colorado. In Germany he was Commanding General of the 1st Infantry Division (Forward), Commanding General 3rd Infantry Division, Deputy Commander-in-Chief, US Army Europe and Commanding General V US Corps. Earlier in 1981 he was named Commandant of the US Army Infantry School, Fort Benning, GA and appointed Chief of Infantry, the first so designated since 1940. He served on staffs from Battalion to the Army and Joint Staff, was Inspector General and Director of Personnel, US European Command and Executive to the Supreme Commander, Allied Powers Europe. General Wetzel retired from the Army in June 1986 with over 34 years active service and moved from Frankfurt, Germany to Columbus, GA.

Following retirement General Wetzel operated Wetzel International a consulting firm and later was President & CEO of European Foods, Inc. Sam was on the Board of Directors of The Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company (A&P) and the Columbus Bank & Trust Company. He served on the Boy Scout Council, United Way Board, Economic Development Committee of the Columbus Chamber of Commerce, Advisory Board of the Columbus Civic Center, Homeland Security Board, Facilitator of the American Cancer Society Man to Man Prostate Cancer Support Group and as a Volunteer of the Buick Open and Southern Open Golf Tournaments. He is a member of the Columbus Downtown Rotary Club, St Anne’s Catholic Church, the Military Officers Association and The Military Order of The World Wars, where he is the National Vice Commander-in-Chief and Chairman of their National Security Committee.

General Wetzel’s military awards and decorations include the Distinguished Service Medal, the Silver Star, Bronze Star, two Legions of Merit, Defense Superior Service Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, 6 Air Medals, the Combat Infantryman’s Badge w/Star and many other service and campaign ribbons. He was also decorated by the German Government with the Ehren (Honor) Cross in Gold and the Bundesverdienst (Federal Merit) Cross.

General Wetzel lives in Columbus with his wife Eilene and they have seven children and eleven grandchildren. His hobbies are golf, hunting and fishing.