



VETERAN SPOTLIGHT

GUY CERDA

When I entered boot camp, I was a scrawny one hundred forty five pound kid. And when I graduated, I was a one-hundred sixty-five-pound man; between all of the exercise and square meals, I packed on twenty pounds of muscle in just eight weeks.”

It was in boot camp though that Cerda experienced one of the most comical moments in the service.

“We were only three weeks into basic when myself and a couple of other recruits were ordered to pull guard duty and protect the ammo dump,” he recalled. “The only problem was, we hadn’t been qualified yet with firearms and so they couldn’t give us guns. So instead, they gave us axe handles and told us to guard the dump from any intruders. I don’t know what we were supposed to do with axe handles if someone really wanted to break in, but in the military you do what you are told to do with what you have.”

After basic training it was determined that Cerda would stay stateside to help serve his country. His experience working in a grocery store had made him a natural for a job as a supply specialist. He remained at Fort Ord and was assigned to the 101 St. Transport Unit. He and his fellow soldiers were responsible for maintaining all of the stocks that a fighting force would need to be mobilized anywhere in the world within 48 hours.

“We didn’t have any specific training classes, and instead learned our jobs through OJT,” he said.

Cerda must have learned well, because during his stint at Fort Ord, orders came up twice that he was to be deployed to Viet Nam.

“My superiors always pushed back though, and said that I was too valuable for them to let me go; they always got my orders waived.”

In spite of his busy schedule, Cerda still found time to carry on with the part of his life he left behind when his draft notice came through.

“I knew that there was always a chance that I would get sent to Viet Nam, and I really wanted to have something to come home to and to fight for, and so I got married while I was serving,” he said. “And before long my wife was pregnant with our first child.”

Guy Cerda was mustered out of the Army after just 21 months, three months shy of his two-year commitment. President Richard Nixon, the same Commander in Chief who had ordered the randomizing of the Selective Service through lottery, was now planning to eliminate it altogether and draw down the troop levels.

He left active duty, but continued to fulfill his commitment of four years as a reservist. In the meantime, he attended college and built a comfortable life for he and his family.

Although he never saw combat, Guy Cerda is proud of his military service, and would have gone into battle if ordered.

“The one thing I know,” he says. “Is that this freedom is not free, and that someone has to pay for it.”

Interviewed and written by: Christopher J. Lynch

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