

Heather Kuplast/Period 3

Morgan Holcomb/Period 5

Erin Kirkpatrick/Period 5

Alfred Aguilar

Army

30 Years in Service



Alfred Aguilar

Alfred Aguilar, also known as Al grew up with a large family in the east side of Los Angeles. His mother had to raise him and seven other children, this kept her very busy and it was hard for her to pay special attention to one specific child. Between the ages of eleven and seventeen, Al began to run the streets of L.A. Al was good at running, but never had the opportunity to join a team at his school because his priority was surviving day by day. He enjoyed partying, smoking and drinking like most children in the high school that he went to. All of his partying began to get him in trouble but Al continued with this lifestyle. Al didn't have anyone to help him through his adolescent years. Therefore, he struggled to keep focused on his education in high school. Thus he was never able to graduate from high school because at seventeen he ran into trouble with the police.

At eighteen Al's mother kicked him out of the house, and he was homeless for a week. Eventually, his probation officer told Al that he had to get out of L.A, if he wanted to clean up his life. Al finally decided to join the military. Al claims he made the decision of joining the military because if he joined the military he wouldn't be homeless. In 1973, Al made the decision of

going into the Army. He chose the Army because one of his brothers was a part of that branch. When Al enlisted for the army, he didn't even know that the Vietnam War was still going on. When he first signed up, he only planned to serve for two years.

At boot camp they would scream and yell at the soldiers making it very hard for most of the members. Al was used to being yelled at, at home, making him immune to them using aggressive language. He knew that boot camp would be extremely hard, but he was used to be told what to do and how to do it. He was physically in good condition making that part of boot camp very easy for him. In the beginning of his military career Al was sent to artillery school. Al didn't even know what that was. He thought that they were sending him to art school. He soon realized that they weren't teaching him how to paint or draw. Instead he learned to use guns, bombs, and bullets.

Al was never really interested in history, but when he was stationed in Germany he saw all the scars World War II had left behind. One thing he saw that sparked his interest was a broken down building full of bullet holes. Another thing that he got to witness was the horrific leftovers of some concentration camps. He then took more interest in the history and developing a sense of honor fighting for our country.

As his military life moved on, he became a guard on the Czechoslovakian border for the Iron Curtain. While in Germany Al was told that if the Communists jumped the fence, Al and the other men only had 24 hours to live if they were lucky. There were many of times he thought he was going to die if the Communists passed the Iron Curtain. In Germany, Al would freeze all day and night long. At these points he felt as if God had forgotten him. Even though he was miserable he knew this war was better than World War II. Al kept telling himself that no matter

how bad his life felt there had to be someone out there who's life was worse than his own. Al played baseball, pulled pranks, and most importantly laughed whenever he could to get through his hard times. There was always something worse they could have been in than what they were experiencing, and the only reason they survived was because they kept hope.

One day while playing baseball, the boys and Al found what they thought was an air vent underneath the grass at the baseball diamond. When he pulled up the wood he saw German swastikas with arrows. It turned out to be an underground railroad that the Nazis used for transportation without being in the way of getting hit from bombs being dropped down on them. All Al and the other men knew was what the officers told them. Other than that they wouldn't get the news that the rest of the public would get about the war.

During his service, Al met a lot of people that he held dear to his heart. One day when they were turning in their guns, and Al's friend pretended to be a bank robber. He said, "If you don't give me your money, I will kill myself." He then put his gun to his head and pulled the trigger not knowing there were still bullets left in there. He thought the gun was unloaded, but was sadly mistaken. Al could see the shock and pain in his eyes, and watching his friend slowly die took a huge toll on him.

After Germany Al decided that he would rather be in the medical field for the service. He then went to school to be a medic for the Army. Al made the decision to be a medic because of the helplessness he felt when his friend was shot. When Al became a medic the Palestinian war started. During his free time Al liked to hang out with nurses and drink. While working as a medic, he met a woman who would eventually become his wife.

Al then worked as an ambulance driver for the Navy as a civilian for fifteen years. Al liked being a medic, but he saw a lot of horrific things doing it. This section of the military saw some of the worst stuff because they had to go and try to help all the disasters. After that he transferred to March Air Force Base and spent thirteen years there.

Al ended up getting married to one of the nurses on May Day of 2003 in Kansas. This was his 30th year in the service. They got married in Kansas because that's where he was based, and he thought he was about to be deployed to Iraq. In the end, he did not get selected for deployment. In 2005, Al finally retired after thirty-two years. He retired as a First Sergeant. After his time in the service, he continued to meet people who went through situations like his. His neighbor had fought and survived the invasion of Normandy France. After seeing the Big Red One Unit symbol on Al's car he informed Al that he too had been a part of the same unit. His neighbor recently past away last year and left Al with some souvenirs he had collected. Among those things were two containers of sand from Normandy, France and Crucifix Hill, as well as a Big Red One watch that Al wears to this day.

Al now is happily married and has four children. He has two sons and two daughters, one of his sons is thirty-six, lives in Arizona and is in a rock band. His other son is twenty-seven and is in a punk band. One of his daughters is twenty-one and is a R.N. His other daughter goes to UCR. Al now works at UCR helping disabled students get around the campus.

In the service Al learned how to be a man. He learned to put everything on the table and do the right thing. The war made him open his eyes to living a full life. Also from being in the service he now values education and the history behind all the things that have happened. He learned that if you do something wrong you need to lay it out and take the punishment. Al claims

he met amazing people in the service and wouldn't change it for anything. When Al was young and getting in to trouble, he never anticipated living past thirty. He thanks his parole officer for saving his life and showing him a better one.