

Madysen Bellanca

Kimberly Root

Per. 3

Anthony Bellanca

Army 1970-1972

### Anthony Bellanca

Anthony was born on October 15, 1947. Before Anthony was drafted, he was able to complete a college level education working with math as an accountant. The Vietnam War started on November 1, 1955 and Anthony got drafted in July 1970, near the end of the war. The Vietnam War started because it was a U.S. strategy to contain the spread of communism. Many people, mostly young people, did not understand why we were fighting and why our men were dying in combat not for the freedom or democracy of their country. He never saw combat, but he still played an important role to the war efforts. Anthony did not really have any background on war. His father was never in war and he and his father never really talked about war, so he did not know what to expect if he did see combat. Anthony's life was permanently changed once he was drafted and he would not change a thing about it.

When Anthony was on the verge of graduating high school, the government started drafting people for the U.S. Army. The way they would draft people is they would assign a specific birthday a random number and then they would pick a certain chunk of numbers randomly, and if your number was in that chunk you would be drafted depending on your physical state. Unlike

many people, he thought the way people got drafted was as fair as it could be and that “it was a good system.” Anthony was not drafted straight out of high school; he had a “free pass” until he finished college to get his degree, majoring in accounting. Once he graduated, he knew for certain that he was going to be drafted because the number his birthday got was in the beginning of the drafting poll. When he got drafted he had a son who was under a year old, so that was another struggle to add to his life at this time. The thought of leaving his family was very unsettling for Anthony; that was one of the hardest things about going into the service. Not only was it hard for Anthony, but it was also hard for his family back at home for the same reason<sup>s</sup> he was afraid of. Thousands of people were dying in this war, which made his family even more worried. Anthony had his first born child, then six months later he was drafted. When he knew that he was going to be going into service, he was very nervous and like many other situations during this time, there was a lot of uncertainty in his life which was frightening for him. Even though the thought of being drafted was scary, this was not the most difficult part of service.

The next step after being drafted was going to boot camp in Monterey, California. During boot camp, they would teach the basics of war: how to shoot a gun, what to do in different scenarios, how to kill, etc. This was one of the hardest, life changing experiences of Anthony’s life by far. He was in boot camp for about two months and that experience was extremely challenging. One day during basic training, they were all practicing on a firing line and one of the men decided to turn his gun and himself toward one of the people in charge to ask him a question. All of a sudden Anthony heard “DROP!”, so he did what he was told and then he found out what happened later. As he chuckled he said it was scary, but an “interesting” day at boot camp. During these two months, he was periodically allowed to talk to his family, which added

to his fear from the uncertainty of what was happening with his family. One thing that helped him with the stress and the anxiety during boot camp was God. He stated, "Everyone had their own ways of coping with their emotions and the pressure that was put onto them. My way of coping with this pressure was having my rosary in my pocket with me at all times and when I felt really pressured or down I would pull it out and hold it tightly and say a prayer." God answered his prayers for him by giving him this new perspective and life changing experience. Boot camp was more different for him because he only knew war from the news and reading, he really did not know what to expect during this time of his life. Another time during boot camp, there was a virus going around the military and Anthony remembered that they had to leave all the windows open during the night. In the place boot camp was located, thick fog rolled in during the night and Anthony remembered when he woke up the next morning he could not see anything across the room, which he thought was very bizarre, but awesome. Even though boot camp was one of the hardest things he has ever had to do in his entire life, he learned his life lessons and earned a new respect for all the men out there fighting for our country.

The next step in Anthony's journey during this short period of his life was a time while working in the travel payment section of the Army. This section of the Army wrote checks for the different places the Army personnel traveled to. He was stationed in Fort Huachuca, Arizona; it was in the desert. Before his family moved to Arizona with him, he was able to communicate with his family more often during this time, unlike boot camp. After his family came out to Arizona to live with him, they lived on a base for about a year and this Army base had many good facilities because the base was isolated. While he was stationed out in the desert, for entertainment they did racket ball, ceramics, and were able to socialize with friends. They would

all play cards, have barbeques, and talk with each other. They became a support group for each other when things got tough or they needed someone to talk to. Sadly he has lost contact with these friends. Working for the travel payment section of the Army, Anthony said it was like a regular job; it did not require anything special for him to be able to achieve the tasks he was giving in the travel payroll . During this time, he could be called into combat at any time, which added to the stress in his life. He was called to go into combat a couple of times, but each time they decided against it because they didn't need that many people. Since the war was coming to an end, they decided to lower the amount of people going into combat, which is why they decided against sending Anthony into combat. The travel payment section of the Army was perfect for Anthony because it trained him for what he would do in his future.

Anthony was happy when he was excused from service, but it gave him a new perspective on life that made him who he is today. Before he got drafted, he did not think anything special of people who go into combat, but after his time in service he truly sees them as heroes. The irony of his opinion is that he was just as much of a part the Army as someone who was in combat, and he does not see himself as a hero. If he would have been sent into combat he said, "I don't think [I] would have felt safe anywhere." When people ask him theoretical questions, he says that he could answer the question, but in reality he will never know what would have happened, because it did not happen.

Even though originally he would not have volunteered for the Army, he would not have changed anything about his experiences from July 1970 through January 1972. Since he relied on God during the hard times, it strengthened his relationship with God and with all the anxiety,

stress, fear, and nervousness, it gave him life lessons that shaped him to be the amazing man he is today.