

Valentina Sanabria
Vaunya Ayers
Candelaria Pedro
Period 2

Joseph Helter
Army/ Air Force
10 yrs. / 15 yrs.

Jody Helter
Navy
22 yrs.

Joseph Helter and Jody Helter

U.S. veterans, these are the people who risked their lives and gave their time to save the freedom that America promised. We had the honor of meeting Joseph and Jody Helter, two amazing veterans. Their stories made us realize how important it is to recognize them and to thank them for all they do to keep our country safe.

Joseph Helter, the father of Jody Helter, was born in Nebraska 1939. When Joseph entered his teen years he dropped out of high school and due to his choice he struggled to find a good paying job that would support his family because he didn't have a diploma. As his last resort Joseph volunteered to serve in the Navy but his wishes to serve were denied because of his physical performance during the exam. This left him feeling forced to join the Army which shipped him to Colorado for his training in boot camp. His first day of boot camp took a toll on him and caused him to become homesick. Joseph's response to the Army was "They made you a believer," and that it separated the leaders from the quitters. During this time the Army had very

harsh training. They would do a number of pull ups and if the “pull ups” weren’t done appropriately the person would be sent to the back of the line to do them again. The training would get harsher when the Sgt. in charge would take their belt and chase the soldier with it. Everything was always serious during training but Joseph succeeded 4 years later and eventually got sent to be part of a group of soldiers that were being sent to fight in the Vietnam War, he didn't have a choice, he did what he was told to and tried to do it as calmly and fast as possible. During the war, the Army allowed letters to be sent and received. This allowed Joseph to write to his family frequently and he was able to get satisfaction in knowing that everyone was doing well, that brought him peace and lowered his stress. In time of war a pre-combat ritual was something that didn’t cross Joseph's mind because it was just simply not needed. His response to it was “you go in, do what you do and get out” Joseph ended his Army service on October 25th, 1967 and moved on to joining the Air Force. He stated that life as an Air Force soldier is very different to one of an Army soldier, there were more benefits in the Air Force. When Joseph concluded his service in the Air Force he retired in November of 1982 with a rank of an E6 tech sergeant and was awarded many medals. A few of these medals were from being an expert rifleman, and now volunteers his services as an honor guard for veterans, and flag folding. Joseph stated that up to this day he has dreams about combat and about his years in the service, he knew that a military life was not going to be easy but he did it for the benefit of his family and the country. Following Joseph’s retirement he successfully obtained his associates degree in 2 years. He did work in a correctional facility. Because of the experiences of war, Joseph is a fearless and proud man. He is now retired. He is proud to say "My three children are all veterans. They served their country just like I did."

Jody Helter was born on October 20th, 1959 in Lincoln, Nebraska and continued what seems to be a family tradition. Continuing her education, she finished college with a Bachelors' degree and with the desire to teach she successfully gained employment in the Riverside Unified School District at Woodcrest Elementary and in the Val Verde Unified School District. After facing challenges in teaching she decided to join the military. The only problem was which branch of the military. It was obvious to her that the Navy would suit her due to their fashionable uniforms and men with long beards, she joined the Navy on April of 1984.

Although at first she wanted to join the Army like her father Joseph Helter, his desire was that she did not so he attempted to talk her out of enlisting with the army. Little did she know what she was in for as being how she described a "rude awakening" Jody describes her arrival to the boot camp in detail, about how they were woken up at 2 A.M. to work and set everything up. When she was done at about 4 the next morning she took a snooze to be awakened back up 2 hours later to the sound of a bell. When this bell was rung the ladies had 20 minutes to get ready which was very different from her normal time frame. Jody got use to the wake up calls and timing. She had a very entertaining story during her time onboard ship. Once, her commanders had her walk up the stairs of the ship twice to search for a "red light." After her second time coming back to let them know there were not any up top, she realized that the light was an everyday usual light bulb. It was just covered by a red shade. These were very classical pranks pulled on her as well as many others.

Jody served in the Navy Reserves for 17 yrs. before being recalled to help in the Iraq freedom movement. Although she was not in combat she supported the war and got a glimpse of the casualties from the outcome of the war. Throughout all that was going on, she had a stuffed

companion to accompany her (Burly the bear). A little bear that she got from her friend as a special gift, which to this day she still has it kept safe on her dresser. With her being in the more modern age, she was able to stay in touch with her family more often than her father was able to in the Vietnam War. These were mostly calls given by friends and family members who would send phone cards to support the charge of those calls. During her time in the Middle East she was able to find some entertainment such as exercising in the gym, watching movies and even attending a live country concert. Following the war she completed her service and was honorably discharged. She does have some regrets of not staying in the active service longer and making a career for herself. Despite her regrets, she now works as a member of VFW post 12020 in the veteran cemetery with her father and they reminisce on the memories of them unselfishly serving this country, her service days as she said were "bitter sweet."