

Lyndsey Morgan and Jazzmine Contreras

Period 2

Ken Horner

United States Air Force

33 Years of Service

Ken Horner

If it weren't for our veterans, our country wouldn't be what it is today. They risk their lives in order to protect America and keep everyone living in it safe. Among these brave veterans is Ken Horner who has been serving for over 33 years in the United States Air Force. Mr. Horner serves as an Air Force Reserve Technician which means he refuels airplanes. He takes a great amount of pride in what he does for the protection of his country.

Ken Horner is from Toms River, New Jersey, and attended Toms River High School East. Before graduating, he had the desire to become an architect. However, right after graduating, at the young age of 18, he was influenced by an older friend to join the Air Force Reserve. Prior to this, he'd had no desire to join the military and felt as if it was for people who couldn't get a job anywhere else. He admits that the only reason he joined was for the benefits of a college education, later earning 3 different associates degrees. His father, formerly in the Navy, was very supportive of his decision. His mother, on the other hand, was not as fond of him joining the military. "My mother was worried for my life," said Mr. Horner. Along with his father, his siblings were also very supportive of his decision to join the Air Force.

Ken Horner started his career as a Security Police Officer in the New Jersey National Guard in 1982. When he was first stationed, he was an hour away from his home making it very difficult to be away from his family. Although there was a 12 hour time difference, he was still able to make phone calls to his family. He was only able to make phone calls once a week, but that comforted him the most. Horner became an Air Force Boom Operator after serving 10 years as a Police Officer. Boom Operators go up in an aircraft and connect themselves to other planes to refuel them. As of today, Mr. Horner is still a Boom Operator.

For Horner, one of his biggest fears before joining in the service was dying. He spoke about his plane leaking gas drastically. "It was like driving on a highway in a rainstorm with no windshield wipers. That's what it was like when my plane was leaking gas" explained Horner. Joining the service was way different than what he expected. He believed Air Force was for people who couldn't get occupations. Air Force Boot Camp was a shocking, harsh and pressure-filled camp. He was forced to do many things that made him feel ill and have dreadfully painful cramps. Aside from physical pain, he endured emotional pain as well. Military brought a lot of self-testing challenges, but it also brought memorable stories.

Being in the service for over 33 years has provided Mr. Horner with amazing opportunities. He's been able to travel the world and learn a lot about himself as well. Being in the Air Force has given him a lot more confidence, pride, and leadership skills. It's also made him much more outgoing. Coming out of high school he was very timid, but after enlisting he was forced to come out of his shell. Overall, he views his time in the service as a very positive experience. "If I were to sum it up, the words are 'I matter'. I might not be able to save everyone, but the one small thing I do makes a difference."

