

Leo Bobadilla

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Leo Bobadilla served in the United States Air Force from 1967 to 18 November 1977. He joined the service during the time of the Vietnam War, but it was not by choice. He came into the country in the month of June but by the month of August he had received a draft notification from the Army. His family did not want him to join the Army because they feared he would be sent to Vietnam. Instead his brother thought that it would be better if he joined the Navy, like he did. He made some calls but he discovered that there were no available examinations to get in, so he then decided to call the Air Force. The Air Force said they would gladly take him in for an examination for that same day if he could get there in the next thirty minutes. He made it there in time and was able to join the Air Force. He then began his basic training in the Lone Star State of Texas. After his training in Texas, his role in the Air Force officially started. He contributed by working with the supply computer for a couple of years. He then decided to work as a machinist and began his work making parts for the airplanes.

A large part of military services is the traveling, which Leo Bobadilla did quite a bit of. As part of the Air Force, he headed to a remote site in Alaska that overlooked Siberia in Russia. He and other Air Force members served as America's first warning if the Soviets decided to bomb them from that side of the world. In order to keep themselves entertained in this remote area they played table tennis and went running (when the weather permitted). Sometimes the weather would reach temperatures low as -70 degrees and was too cold out for

outdoor activities so they would stay inside, listen to records, and talk. Aside from staying in Alaska for a few years he also visited North California, Vietnam, the Philippines, South California, Germany, and Florida. He viewed all of the travelling in a positive way because it gave him the opportunity to see and explore the world.

After Alaska he got stationed in North California until he volunteered to go to Vietnam on 31 July 1969. Since the Air Force do not usually take part in ground combat, Leo Bobadilla did not take part in the combat, though he could hear the bombs going off in the distance. At one point while in Vietnam, the base he was stationed at got hit by a bomb. No one died, though quite a few people got injured from the blast, and luckily Leo was not one of them. Although he did not witness the battles first hand, he certainly did see the aftermath of them. While walking around in an airport, he came across the body bags of so many dead soldiers that they were piled high, stacked on top of each other. Despite Leo not engaging in any combat, things were still quite dangerous for him. When travelling by air in Vietnam, it was mandatory for anyone to carry an M-16 and revolver before flying. He stayed in Vietnam till 31 July 1970, after which he went to a base in the Philippines, then in Southern California. The population's reaction to the military's involvement in the war was not very positive. The military was disliked and there was a lot of protesting against them, especially from students. Many of the members of the military would attempt to blend in with the common population in order to fit in.

Following the end of the Vietnam War on 30 April 1975, he got stationed in Germany, where he was able to see the Berlin Wall and Hitler's summer house in the mountains. While in Germany, he would drive to the French countryside where he would picnic with his family. He continued serving the Air Force in Germany till 18 November 1977, about two years after the Vietnam War ended. Once he went on leave he decided to travel for a while and get to know other parts of the world. He visited places such as Ireland, Italy, Spain, France, and Holland. With the help of the G.I. Bill he received a free college education in which he earned two degrees: a science degree and an AA degree.

Overall, Leo enjoyed his experience in the Air Force because it gave him the opportunity to learn many things. He claimed that the military taught him to take responsibility for his actions and that everything he used in his life after the service he learned from the military. Although he does not attend any military reunions he used to volunteer at the March Air Force Base in Riverside, California, where he worked on the planes there after retiring from working as a mechanic for the US Airways. His picture even used to hang on the wall at the March Air Force Base, though when he stopped volunteering a few years ago he took the picture with him.