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Mike Hamilton

Army

3 Years of Service

11/14/48-

Mike Hamilton

By the time Mike Hamilton was only a senior in high school, he already had some pretty challenging moments in his life, but through those challenges a new opportunity opened for him. He was failing chemistry and really needed this class to pass high school so his chemistry teacher made him a deal. If he were to get a full 200 points in his chemistry project then he would pass Mr. Hamilton so he could graduate. So Mike, willing to do anything to pass high school went to a college friend of his and asked him for help and for some advice. His friend told him to go to the Purex soap company and see if they would give him the formulas on how they make these soaps and how these soaps help fight against scum stains. So Mike got everything he needed and went home and worked hard the whole week putting charts together and why this formula was needed for this certain soap. So the day for presentation came, and the teacher asked the class who would like to present their project. His teacher was shocked when Mike raised his hand. His teacher was so shocked because this was a kid who ditched his class and had never raised his hand the entire school year. The teacher allowed him to present first, and Mike, talking to the class with such confidence, amazed everyone. His teacher who was just mesmerized by Mike's work, stood up and looked to the class and asked "Well, class, what do you think we should give him." and the whole class looking at the teacher replied "200 points for sure!"

But to Mike's shock the next day when he arrived to school feeling good that he would be able to pass high school, he saw his Chemistry teacher and his teacher pulled him to the side and said, "It doesn't feel right that these students worked hard the whole school year and you get to pass with just one great project." Mike feeling worried asked him "What can I do to fix this problem?" His teacher told him that he needed to do an outline the entire second semester chemistry book. Mike hurried home and cracked open that book and started taking all the notes for all of 2nd semester. When he came back the following week with a notebook full of notes, he gave it to the teacher and the teacher flipped through the notebook and looked at him and says, "Ok you pass" The teacher had wanted him to make up some work and to work hard and so he passed high school.

After high school he became an aircraft mechanic for McDonnell-Douglas Mechanic and was paid about \$40 a week, he was attending Long Beach city college. His first semester did not go so well and he was put on academic probation his second semester also didn't go well, so the counselor called him up and told him that he had to sit out of college for a year on academic suspension He went to the Administration Office and petitioned with a written request. to speak to the Dean of the college. At his appointment with the Dean he said that he could talk to the Dean of the college and Mike being a brave and confident young man tried to persuade him to let him back in. After an hour of talking to the Dean, the Dean did not give in on him, Mike begged him and said, "If I get kicked out, they will send me to Vietnam!" The Dean looked at Mike and said "Son, that might be the best thing for you." He let him back in after only one semester but he received his draft notice. So Mike knew he was going to be sent to Vietnam, he grabbed his friend and talked to an Army recruiter. He told him that he and his friend wanted to

fly Helicopters, that it was always their dream to be pilots, so the recruiters sent them off to see if they would pass the tests, His friend ended up passing the exam but Mike did not he happened to fail the eye exam. A few doors down was a Marine recruiter and they both sat down and talked to him. Later on that week he returned to the recruiting office and dropped by to say thank you to the Army recruiter for everything that he has done for him and his friend. The recruiter asked him why he was there early and he told him that he was joining the Marines. So the Army recruiter made a deal with him. If Mike were to lose at a game of pool, than he would enlist with the Army and have any job (except pilot) and he offered Mike an opportunity to go to Westpoint If he won, he could join the Marines. They played pool and Mike lost the game. Mike went to his friend who was sitting with the Marine recruiter and told him they were enlisting in the Army and his friend reached over to the Marine and grabbed the enlistment papers and tore it and they both went to enlist in the Army. The Army recruiter offered Mike a position as an MP (Military Police), and his friend as a helicopter crew chief

Mike went to basic training and once he finished basic training he was promoted to Private E-2. When he went to Vietnam he was stationed adjacent to Tuy Hoa Air Force Base. While he was stationed there he made a best friend whose name was Phil, Mike also was well known to everyone on the base, even to the Korean troops that were stationed there with him. One day a Korean friend of his offered to sell him a small refrigerator for \$40 and of course he bought it because cold drinks were hard to get at the base, so Phil and Mike both pitched in and wanted it. Mike knew a guy who managed the PX where he could go to restock his mini fridge with cokes and other cold drinks and he later sold his sodas for 19 cents a pop and his fridge would be empty by the end of the week. So a fellow soldier kept asking Mike if he could by the

fridge off of him and for the longest time Mike said no until one day his Korean friend asked him if he wanted to buy a bigger fridge and that he would sell it to him for \$80, Mike being a smart businessman sold, the mini fridge to the soldier for \$80 and with that \$80 he bought the bigger fridge and was able to keep in stocked longer.

Mike did not see much combat, but, when he did, it was when he was on patrol. One day when the North vietnamese started shootingat his jeep and the gunner in the back shot at the enemy with a beast of a weapon called the Quad 50. The Quad 50 was a gun that connected four 50 caliber guns to each other and shot all at the same time, and was able to cut a palm tree in half like butter.

One funny joke that Mike and his friend Phil pulled off was when around 4 am one night mortars were being dropped on the base they jokingly told each other they had inspection from the commander in the morning, and a fellow soldier by the name of Sgt. Johnson, a nosy man heard them say this and when the mortars stopped everyone went to sleep and in 6 am Johnson woke everyone up and said they had inspection, Mike knowing full well they didn't just went along with what Johnson said . Later in the day Mike's superiors needed a ride to the airport because they heard that a commander was coming for inspection, and Mike couldn't believe his ears, he didn't think that his little joke would make these people take it this far, so he drove them to the airport and he waited with them for an hour or so and no commander ever showed up and he kept the secret that it was all a joke.

Mike came back to the US and went back to college with his GI Bill, and later got married. Mike still keeps in touch with Phil who lives in Massachusetts. Mike Hamilton's story

was truly a awesome story, and we will never forget the words he told us which will always keep us going, he said "With every challenge comes a new opportunity."