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Period 3

Richard Kaukani  
Army  
1964-1970

### Richard Kaukani

Richard Kaukani is a United States Army veteran whose journey started from his childhood. Richard was born and raised in Waimea, Kauai, Hawaii. He lived there for nineteen years and enjoyed surfing. After graduating from high school he didn't know what he wanted to do for his career but decided to first go to college for demolition at Brigham Young University in Hawaii. While in college Richard didn't take his courses seriously and just wanted to play and have fun. After a year of doing so he found himself with bad grades. As a result of this, Brigham Young University told Kaukani that he had to take a semester off from his college studies. Richard decided then that he needed something to help with decisions and to get his act together. Initially he thought to join the Marines but then changed his mind and enlisted in the United States Army, which his father served in as well.

After enlistment, Mr. Kaukani was flown to basic training on the Monterrey Bay in Northern California- Fort Ord, California. Later in his career, he attended Aberdeen Proving Grounds in Maryland for MOS (Military Occupational Specialty) training. He recalls training being not only physically challenging, but a mentally challenging experience. Richard felt very homesick and didn't enjoy all the people yelling at him. He stated that, "Even though training was difficult, it was intentional in order to train the minds of the soldiers to be able to focus and tune in in combat." Because of this, he eventually understood the methods being enforced in the training camps. He stated that, "In training they build you down, but there is a pride that you get

after training that you never lose.” Richard remembers the first Sunday he was at training. There were about one hundred and forty five men and they all had to be up, ready, and out by eight in the morning. The people who were in charged asked everyone if they were going to church and if so to raise their hands. Three men raised their hands, one of those men being Richard, and those three men ended up getting the whole day off and went to church. The other men who didn’t raise their hands had to do labor related tasks. The next Sunday when the men in charged asked again who wanted to go to church, everyone raised their hands. Kaukani met many people while training and valued the experiences and friendships he made.

After training camp, Richard was first stationed in Giessen, Germany. His first job assignment was being a clerk. After six months of doing that job he was transferred to a Hawk Missile site where he received on the job training as a launcher crewman. Mr. Kaukani’s MOS was 414 guided missile propellant explosives; he learned how to dispose of missile propellants and ammunition. Richard eventually changed to 16D20 Hawk Launcher Crewman and then to 16D40 Hawk Section Chief. Richard moved up quickly in the Army because of his talent and skill on the job. He was promoted to Platoon Sergeant after three years of service. Normally one would need eight years of service in order to advance to Sergeant, so his boss had to waive the five extra years that Kaukani needed. Mr. Kaukani then became the Platoon Sergeant for the whole firing and launching squad which made him liable for \$90,000,000 worth of equipment. Mr. Kaukani eventually got promoted to S Sergeant for all his leadership and missile-work talents.

Richard was later stationed in Butzbach, Germany from 1965-1967. While on leave in Germany, Kaukani enjoyed traveling to places like Italy, Spain, Poland, Austria, and Copenhagen. Traveling to these places was very cheap, so cheap that he could buy a full eight

course meal for just a dollar and ten cents. When in Germany, Mr. Kaukani met his now wife, Charlotte. They fell in love instantly and he asked her to marry him the second time they met. Even though he had a year left to serve in Germany, Charlotte waited. She sent him letters and cookies frequently. Richard's family would always send him letters. However, Kaukani wasn't a fan of sending letters and would only send them on special holidays. One of Richard's most memorable experiences was when he was stationed in Germany and got into a nearly fatal military car accident in which the vehicle he was in lost its brakes and ran into the truck in front of them. From the impact Richard flew and fell in between both trucks. Because of this, Richard was hospitalized for three months. Doctors told him that he'd never be able to walk again but he proved them wrong and re-learned how to. Because of the accident Mr. Kaukani was offered full disability, but refused it. He believes it's the best thing he ever did. Despite this event, Richard still remained in the Army working in the same field as before, with the missiles.

After Richard came back from serving in Germany, at the time, he saw no changes in society. However, throughout the years he has seen many changes, the most important being, the cutting back on the United States Military. Mr. Kaukani feels as though America needs to expand and strengthen its military system and prepare for anything that could happen. Today he notices China and Russia's Military expanding. Despite the issues he notices today, Richard always stays positive. Mr. Kaukani believes everyone should, "always vote Republican!"

Mr. Kaukani was last stationed in Key West, Florida. He never saw combat while serving, but while he was in Florida he tracked all aircraft in the Florida area including hijacked aircrafts from the United States to Cuba. Richard always had his dog tags on with him no matter

what and considered them good luck. He felt that they were, “A good luck charm, nothing bad would happen with them on.”

Richard’s experience in the army was a valuable and memorable one for him. He remembers and appreciated the guys that worked for him because he says they never complained and always did what they were told, including the privates and draftees.

Kaukani earned a total of seven medals and several honors for his service. These included the National Defense Medal and the Master Missile Man Honor which qualified him for an extra \$130 a month. Richard later became hired as an expert for missiles within the Army.

Mixed emotions were abound on Richard’s last day of his service. He felt sad turning in everything and felt that he wasn’t a soldier anymore. He says, “There was so much lost, but also so much gained.” After his army chapter of his life had ended, Richard went back to school after working a little while part time for a trucking company. While back at college Kaukani met a California Highway Patrol officer and became interested in that career and applied. The application process took a year and when the application was finally accepted he went to the California Highway Patrol academy for five months. As an apprentice he received \$246 because of the GI bill. Mr. Kaukani’s first assignment was located in Riverside, California where he has lived ever since.

Today Richard keeps in contact with some of his friends he made from the service through Facebook. He is a part of the DAV (Disabled Veterans Association). Richard’s time serving the United States of America has shaped who he is as a person today and recommends that everyone join the Army.

