

Kevin Diller

Letty Samano

Period 1

James Preston

Air Force and Marines

Years Served:1965-1971

Year interviewed:2016

### James Clifford Preston

James Clifford Preston is a man that believes one of the most important things to do in life is to hold on to memories. Preston served in the Air Force and the Marines for twenty months in the Vietnam war. Afterwards he used what he learned in the military to get him his own business in America. He now lives happily in retirement with his wife Pamela and has five grandchildren. Preston will always be remembered by his service to this country and his time served in Vietnam.

Born in Preston's story of how he ended up signing up for the military begins in 1965 when he graduated high school. At the time, he had no interest in going to a college and the draft was becoming "hot and heavy". Preston had plans to sign up for the Marines with a friend but he was only seventeen and he had to have a guardian to sign for him. His mother would not sign the paper because signing up for the Marines in this time period was a death sentence. She gave Preston the choice of the Air Force or the Navy and he choose the Air Force because he thought he could learn something there that he could use once he re-entered civilian life. In September

1965, Preston headed off for boot camp at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas. This was the first time Preston had ever been this far from home since he was born so, boot camp was a stressful experience but it taught him camaraderie, the importance of teamwork, and depending on fellow service men. He spent 90 days being trained for the war that waited ahead of him.

Soon enough he graduated boot camp but did not go straight into the Vietnam war. From December 1965 to December 1966 he was assigned at Lowry Air Force Base in Denver, Colorado as an air police unit. He was then assigned to Ton Son Nhut Air base in Saigon, Vietnam from 1966 to 1968. After this time he transferred to the Marines and he served in combat duty with the third Marine division in Phu Bai, Vietnam. When he served with this division, they provided support for other troops in the battle of Khe Sahn and they fought in the Tet Offensive. To conclude his service he stayed at the Ruislip Air Base in London, England from 1968 to when he was discharged in June 30, 1971.

Throughout his time of service, Preston took part in many different jobs partially because like many others, he was reassigned a lot. After boot camp, Preston was assigned to an air police unit while he was in Lowry Air Force Base. He was then reassigned to a variety of jobs such as management in Ton Son Nhut Air Base in Saigon. He never really experienced hand to hand combat while on combat duty in Phu Bai, but he was shot at all the same. Preston also received many awards while he was in war. He received the Bronze Star and Air Force Commendation

Medals which he is very proud of. When Preston was 20, he was the youngest person to achieve the rank of Staff Sergeant at the time. Preston suffered no severe wounds but he did get heart disease and diabetes from Agent Orange.

Preston did not return home right away after he was discharged. On the flight over from London to New Jersey, he became very ill and had to be taken to dispensary. In just a day he had healed and was on his way home. He settled back into civilian life Preston began to attend a community college and began his search for work. His community college education was paid for by the GI bill however, once he began to start up in business his company paid for him to go to college at Pepperdine to gain a MBA ( a master's degree in business) and three years of undergraduate studies at Pepperdine. He ended up owning his own company that gave financial services to people and companies. He believes that his military experience really helped him with a business job because the jobs he had in the military were similar and helped him prepare for civilian life. When he was ready to retire he sold that company and retired. He now lives happily with his wife and is thankful that he has lived to long enough to have grandkids. He hopes that he can see the day that they become adults and can not wait to see what they will do in life.

In our opinion, James Clifford Preston is a very interesting man. He has lived and done a lot of good in his lifetime and he believes that whatever chance you get you should hold on to

memories. He thinks that memories are the things that form you and the things that make you who you are today. He is a man that has no regrets and he believes that he has lived a perfect life.

Preston is a man of honor and he is and always will be a hero.