

Nayoko Edwards

Period 4

Kimbrough Bassett

United States Air Force, Navy

9 Years of Service

2016

Kimbrough Bassett, who also goes by Kim, was born in Evanston, Illinois on January 19 1931. As a toddler he moved to Washington D.C. because due to the Great Depression three banks where his father worked failed. Bassett grew up in a family of five which consisted of him, his Mother, Father, and Two sisters. He explained that every family was given a book of ration stamps during the time of World War II, the book was good for helping with groceries, clothes, and essential items for their household. Bassett stated that as a child he had to do a lot of walking because his family was given 12 gallons of gas each month. War was the center of everything at this time in America, there were flags in every window to represent those that have passed away in war and those who have served served. His Grandfather served in the Civil War in 1861 and his father served in World War I. Bassett didn't know what he wanted to do until around the age of fifteen, he says was walking and experienced seeing a jet for the first time. He explains "the way that it reflected the sun was like nothing I'd seen before, and right then and there I knew that I wanted to fly jets".

“Everyone knew that they were going to get drafted.” Said Bassett. Rather than getting drafted, he enlisted into the United States Navy Reserve at the age of 17 he explains that as a child he suffered from Polio, and his left leg was 2 inches shorter than the right. He states that his parents never told him and he almost didn't make it into the Navy, he had to persuade them to let him in. At the start of the Korean War he was on the battleship Missouri. He explains that while being in the Navy he had the opportunity to sail from Rhode Island to Jamaica, and did not get sea sick even in the hurricane. He explains that the Naval training was very physical, but he knew that he was capable of doing it. Bassett was enrolled in the Naval Academy after taking an exam and being one of the 100 people let in. He graduated from the Naval Academy in 1953. Bassett still had a love and infatuation for jets and entered the Air Force after graduating from the Navy. He became a test pilot in San Antonio, Texas and flew a “C 119 boxcar” along with the B-25 and B-29 prop planes while he was there. He was transferred to the Air Force Academy in Denver Colorado as an instructor. Bassett was very driven and wanted to achieve his goal of flying jets. He needed a total of 500 hours to become a copilot and had only 294 hours. Therefore, he volunteered to become a test pilot. He explains that through this experience he “learned how people handle decisions while flying and gained an extra level of knowledge about planes”. Bassett is considered one of the cofounders of the Air Force Academy and states “Test pilots are the safest pilot in the world”. He explains that “Flying is very dangerous” he said he was able to reassure himself by saying “tomorrow’s gonna come and everything will be alright”

Kimbrough Bassett met his wife Carole while in the Air Force Academy and explained that she was one of the secretaries. “She was Catholic, so I became Catholic for her” noted Bassett. Eight months after they got married she was diagnosed with Crohn's disease and had to undergo

a surgery. Bassett loved her so much that he gave up flying jets for her. When asked how he dealt with stress he explained that his faith was what he always looked too. He told us that he was blessed enough not to handle combat in the Military. He is an alumni to two branches and goes back to the reunions that happen every five years. He said that the military helped him realize he could do things he'd never realize he could.

Kimbrough Bassett left the military at the age of 36 and now is 86 years old. He lives in the Air Force Village West in Moreno Valley. He has three children, two boys and one girl. His oldest daughter is in the foreign service and he is very proud of her. He had had the opportunity to encounter different sea animals including sea lions and whales. He worked at Procter and Gamble in California. And had the opportunity to work with computers. He said that if he could go back and change anything about his life he wouldn't because he loved the military very much. "Beethoven wrote the ninth symphony, while deaf! And if that's not motivation to follow your dreams, what is?" Said Kimbrough. He is very passionate about following dreams and believes that if you have a goal you should chase it, and take every opportunity you can because you never know how you'll get where you want to be in life. Just like he did.