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4th Period
Patrick Sprinkel
2 years Army Lieutenant
2016

On March 17th we had the honor to interview Patrick Sprinkel for King High Remembers. Patrick had not only openly talked about the time he served in Vietnam but he also told us about his early and post war life. He was born on April 1st, 1946 in Hollywood, California. Three months later he and his family moved to Coachella, California. At age 3 his parents divorced and later his dad and mom both remarried. Patrick had said to us that he grew up in a diverse environment, he told us that “I grew up at my mother’s with her Arabian husband, I had an African American women take care of me and my father had remarried a Hispanic women, so naturally I learned to love everyone no matter what race they were.” He attended Coachella Valley High School and graduated in 1964. In high school Sprinkel enjoyed being the school mascot, being a thespian, public speaking, and swimming. When asked about his high school experience Patrick said that “Personally I really enjoyed my time in highschool.” He then went to a junior college, College of the Desert, for two years and finished in 1967 and later got accepted into a Cal-State University. However he said “I had grown tired of attending school and was not looking forward to attending college at the time so I decided to enlist into the army at 20 years old.” Around this time, he met his wife at a party and they then started dating.



He explained, "...instead of enlisting for three years you could volunteer your draft for two years." He then was sent to Fort Polk, Louisiana for basic and advanced infantry training. He was content with this position but he was suggested to try to become a candidate for officer school. He was going to pass this up but he talked with his step dad, who said it was a must. He then went to officer training in Georgia for 6 months. In between his training for the military, he decided he wanted to marry his girlfriend. He called her on a Sunday and asked her to get married. Patrick said "It was a difficult time for me to be apart from her so we spontaneously decided to get married on a Thursday." He flew home and they got married that same Thursday.

After he graduated officer school, he and his wife were sent to Germany for 10 months. While there, on a Monday he was promoted from 2nd lieutenant to 1st lieutenant. Then, that same Tuesday his son was born. On the next day, Wednesday, he was given orders to go to Vietnam. He was reluctant to leave his newborn son and wife but he knew that he had to. Three week after orders, October 1969, he flew to Vietnam. On the way there he was listening to the radio. The disc jockey played the song "Leaving on a Jetplane" by Peter Paul and Mary six times. Patrick distinctly remembers that this week was one of the most important and influential weeks of his life, he said "I will never forget the the week I was promoted, the week my son was born, and they week I had to leave my wife and son to be sent into combat in Vietnam." Sprinkel flew into Cam Ranh Bay and then was sent to An Loch Tay Ninh, where he served as a platoon leader with Company A, 1st Battalion (Airmobile) 5th Cavalry. There are two days in his life that he will never forget: New Year's Day 1970 and May 12th, 1970. On January 1st there was fighting and constant fighting all day. He didn't lose one man. For this, he was awarded his first bronze star. (He later earned a second bronze star in Vietnam before he left.) "It was all day

combat, but I didn't lose anyone," said Patrick as he showed us photos of his men. While in Vietnam, Sprinkel met a man named Ed Brady. He said "Brady was like a brother to me; we had almost everything in common." On May 12th, 1970 Brady took Sprinkle's place as platoon leader and went out with a squad into Cambodia. Brady never came back. This completely changed his life. With a heavy heart Patrick told us "After that day I realized I wasn't the same person anymore."

In June 1970 he flew back to Palm Springs to his wife and son and later moved to Los Angeles. He got into CSLA and started school, but never graduated. He realized that the war had affected him too much. After a year of returning from the war, he became an alcoholic. His wife and son left him, while he struggled with alcoholism for 14 more years. Unfortunately, like many Vietnam veterans he said that "I couldn't cope well with some of my experiences in Vietnam so, I climbed in a bottle and stayed there for 14 years." In search to numb his pain Patrick traveled to various cities all over the country, eventually he found himself in San Francisco in 1984. By this time he had joined AA and made some friends that helped him on his path to recovery. Once he became sober, he became a wallpaper salesman. With this job, he got the opportunity to travel to many cities, such as Chicago, Portland, and San Francisco.

In 2009 Sprinkel was diagnosed with his first type of cancer, which he got from Agent Orange, a spray defoliant in that was used in Vietnam. He has had prostate cancer, cancer in the right pelvic bone, colon cancer, and cancer in the left pelvic bone. He still has prostate cancer today and continues to fight it. In his spare time, Sprinkel enjoys talking at local high schools of Palm Springs. He said that opening up to these students has helped him tremendously. Even though he has spoken to these students, he had never been personally interviewed until King

High Remembers. Today, Sprinkel still fights his cancer, speaks to high school students, loves to go shopping at book stores, and interacts with his 2,300 friends on Facebook. We were so glad that we had the privilege to interview Patrick Sprinkel he was such a kind and open minded person who continues to impact the lives of many people just by telling his story.