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Corona

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Bill Ponder

In the United States of America millions of citizens go into the military to protect our country and future generations. One of those heroes who fought for our freedom was Bill Ponder. He was born on July 14, 1940, and was the oldest of nine in his family. Mr. Ponder's adult life started at 18 years old when he and two of his buddies decided they wanted to join the Air Force. Little did they know, they had to pass an entrance exam with certain criteria to get recruited into the military. Bill Ponder later joined the Marines, becoming one of America's hidden heroes.

Mr. Ponder's early life started when he went to Garrison Elementary School in Missouri, an all African American school. His house was right across from the school, making it difficult to get away with hanging out with his friends after school instead of going straight home. It also didn't help that all his teacher's knew where his house was. After Garrison Elementary School, he went to a white high school called Liberty High. Then with his buddies, the know it all 18 year olds, he took a test to join the Air Force. Out of the three friends, only one got in, and it wasn't Mr. Ponder. He tested again the next year when he was 18 and still did not get in. That summer, he was surprised by a man while playing basketball with his friends. The man pulled up in an ugly green car with the word Marines printed in yellow on the side. He was dressed in

uniform and asked for Mr. Ponder and one of his friends. The mysterious man wanted to know why the two of them had not thought about signing up for the Marines. Sure of themselves, the two boys stated that they wanted to enlist in the Air Force. The Marines recruiter proceeded to use reverse psychology on them by saying that he didn't think they could handle being in the Marines. Determined to prove him wrong, Mr. Ponder decided to enlist.

Mr. Ponder's first trip was to "Sunny San Diego" as his recruiter said. However, nothing was very sunny-like when 75 other men like himself landed at night in an airplane and were put on trucks. The ride was very uncomfortable because the driver kept swerving on purpose to make the men land on top of each other. In 1958, he graduated from the military bootcamp and finally earned his title, Marine. Following the next year, he was stationed in Okinawa Japan, one of the bloodiest places in Marine and Army history to train. Upon his return to the states, he went to several companies as a drill instructor and taught history to all his men. Then, in 1966, he went to Vietnam to assist the South Vietnamese Government by helping to get rid of communism in their country. He described Vietnam as a "shooting war," and once he came back to America, he had a new, respectful look at his men. He continued training and recruiting men until he retired 13 years later.

After Mr. Ponder retired in October of 1978, he went to work at the Beverly Hilton Hotel, and over time, he became the Head Security and Safety Chief. It was an incredibly refreshing difference from the military because of how free he was able to act. His job required helping high-profile visitors, ranging from past presidents accompanied by their wives, to Michael Jackson's family. He also dealt with keeping ordinary people in the hotel safe and secure. He once even helped out the entire ABC Television crew in 1984 during the Los Angeles Olympics.

“Your job is to balance what is best for the hotel and the personnel,” he stated. Mr. Ponder was a responsible man who helped push back press and sneak celebrities through side doors while working there. He retired after 17 years of hard work and dedication, finally deciding to take his well-earned retirement.

The definition of a hero is, “a person who is admired or idealized for courage, outstanding achievements, or noble qualities.” Bill Ponder has been a great example to his fellow Americans on what a courageous man is, and was committed to helping others while serving his country. His services in the military and life will be remembered by the children he has spoken to throughout the years and given the recognition he has earned. The experiences of his childhood and being in the Marines has molded him into the man he is today. Bill Ponder is a hero, not just to our country, but to our future generation.