

Breanna Brydon

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Period 4

Ron Pardee

Navy

1967-1979

2017

Ron Pardee

Mr. Pardee served in the Navy during the Vietnam War between the years 1967 to 1971 and his Military Occupational Specialty was a Radioman on Tank Landing Ships (LST). He served two tours in Vietnam and was in reserves for eight years in San Bernardino. Ron Pardee was born in 1947 in a small city in Iowa. At the age of 19, Mr. Pardee dropped out of college and with the loss of his student deferment, his only option was to enlist into the military. Mr. Pardee recalls receiving a call after he enlisted from the enlisting agency that if he were to get drafted into the Army or Marines that he would be sent to Vietnam and die, so he then instead was drafted by the Navy. From this point onward, Mr. Pardee shared his experiences being apart of the Navy, not only what it was like before heading off to war and during war, but what his life was like afterwards and how it has changed him as a person.

Before heading off for war, Mr. Pardee described what bootcamp and specialized training was like. He remembers his first day of basic training, the night before he drove to Great Lakes located in Illinois where training was located, he arrived on camp very late in the night, only to

wake up early to begin training. After basic training was completed, it was then off to bootcamp for three months, and he portrayed it as “not pretty.” Mr. Pardee mentioned that their job was to break your spirit, he said it was demanding work, proclaiming that they would do things like march seven miles with sea bags, climb rope, swim for long durations of time, and other rigorous tasks. For Mr. Pardee himself, the physical aspect of bootcamp was not hard, but instead, how demoralizing it was. In bootcamp you just do what you are told, with no questions asked, and there was inconsiderable respect given between the sailors and the officers. Upon asking Mr. Pardee how bootcamp was for him psychological wise, he said that sleep deprivation was a major tact used in camp to distract from being homesick and how lonely it was. During his time in both bootcamp and war, he said that he would be writing multiple letters a day to anyone, including his mother, father, brother, friends, and every girl he has dated. Once bootcamp was finished, he was then transferred to the East Coast, Bainbridge Maryland, for four months of radioman school. Mr. Pardee had one memory in specific of the night before graduation from radioman school; one of his friends ended up getting drunk and started getting into fights, and Mr. Pardee ended up getting in trouble himself trying to break it up. Once radioman school was completed, it was time for Mr. Pardee to be dispatched.

Ron Pardee served two tours in Vietnam, his first tour was on the LST in brown water, which means in the river, and his second tour in country, which means on land, during both tours he was located in Vietnam. During his first tour, Mr. Pardee was the leading Radioman on LST, they drove around delivering, loading, and unloading various materials and supplies to the DMZ (demilitarized areas); one of these supplies was Agent Orange, which is a blend of herbicides the U.S. sprayed in the jungles of Vietnam and around the North Vietnam demilitarized zones to

remove enemy cover. Agent Orange is very dangerous and many got cancer from it, including Mr. Pardee, he was diagnosed with Prostate Cancer ten years ago. For his final tour, Mr. Pardee flew around to different fire bases and military outposts to fix broken computers and machines. During his service he has witnessed and was involved a lot of unconventional combat near the Vietnamese Demilitarized Zone. He shared a story about how they had to park a tank near a civilian area because there was no more room on base, so a civilian put a rag that was on fire and a grenade into the gas tank of the jeep and closed the cap, and one soldier lost his hand getting out the burning rag. Mr. Pardee personally believed it would be an accident if he were to be killed during battle, with being young he had this sense about him of invincibility, even though there were a lot of casualties that surrounded him. It was an exceedingly emotional experience during Vietnam and is something he tries to forget. It was mentally oppressive and emotionally difficult, he described how every night people would cry themselves to sleep. He shared a story how one night he was at a transit barrack and there was this soldier who was certain he was going to die during battle and wanted to commit suicide, he tried to calm him down and talked him out of it. For Mr. Pardee, he was raised in an environment where he had to work hard, “to be a man,” so he just put up with the stress and sadness, he also turned to drinking as a way to deal with it all. Another story that Mr. Pardee shared was when they were traveling from the Philippines to Vietnam, a thaifoon was announced and their ship was 13,000 miles away from land, and all the sailors were expected to fit onto small rafts and paddle 13,000 miles to the nearest shore. He shared some more light hearted stories as well, like how the sailors on the ship would often go for a “swim call” which meant they all would jump into the ocean and just swim

around; he also shared about the time when they unloaded cases and cases of beer, and the base drank through several hundreds of the cases upon same day as delivering them.

In Guam, they went to Talofofa Falls, which was a World War II combat area. They all were hiking and they saw about twenty leftover World War II tanks and a gorgeous view of a waterfall. He also shared how there were a lot of pranks between the sailors, one in particular was when Mr. Pardee's fellow colleagues tried to prank him by shaving his beard, they did not succeed in doing so and ended up getting hurt in the process. There were various forms of entertainment during the war; Mr. Pardee explained how Marijuana, smoking, and drinking were very popular, you could buy filter-tipped Marijuana for less than a dollar per pack. Mr. Pardee would often watch movies that his friend, Elmo Zumwalt, would let him borrow. Mr. Zumwalt was the Chief of Naval Operations, and one of Mr. Pardee's closest friends he made during the war; he described him as a person with great integrity, he was one the the few who held the sailors accountable and treated them with respect.

On July 4th 1971 Mr. Pardee was discharged, and went home to Riverside. He explained how most soldiers were not welcomed and treated poorly when they got home, but Mr. Pardee did not experience that; he arrived home at night and he wore his civilian clothes. Mr. Pardee was in reserves for eight additional years as a Radioman in San Bernardino; just before he got out, he had an offer for a position of Direct Commission, as Engineer Duty Officer, but did not get it because he was seven pounds too heavy. With the help of the G.I. Bill, he was able to get his Associates and Bachelors Degree, he also worked a full-time job as a motorcycle mechanic for the owner of a shop who served during the Korean War. He also got his Masters and Doctorate Degrees on his own. While in Riverside, he meet his wife and got married at age 26,

they now have two sons. Dr. Pardee is now a distinguished professor at Riverside City College, but he is currently on leave because he had brain surgery in early January.

Dr. Pardee said that war brought out the worst in him, he was an alcoholic, and constantly fighting anyone, but he said it was good for him in other ways; it allowed him to get out of where he grew up and if he did not enlist, he would still be there, living an unhappy life. It also taught him to respect people, and has influenced him today, he holds high regards for all of those who have been or are currently enlisted and believes that people do not have enough respect for them, and that is his main reason for coming to King High Remembers.