

Emerson, Ashley

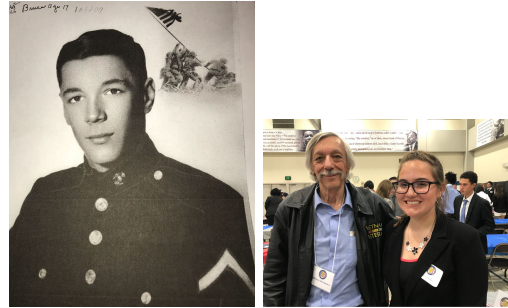
Period 3

Mr. Bruce Mazeika

United States Marine Corps

Served 1966-1969

2018



Bruce Mazeika

Due WWII, Vietnam was divided between North and South with the North being a communist state and the South being a democracy. Ho Chi Minh led the North and wanted to unite the two divisions. Before America's involvement, North and South Vietnam had been in a civil war for almost ten years. America had believed in the domino theory and wanted to prevent further communist nations. Due to this, America had engaged in the war to protect the South from communism so they needed more men to serve. Many men voluntarily enlisted, but America still needed troops. They drafted over 40,000 men for the Marine Corps alone. Some men volunteered and some men were drafted but a teen from Detroit, Michigan's rebellious spirit is what earned him a spot in the United States Marine Corps and his name is Bruce Mazeika.

On December 20th of 1948, Mazeika was born in Detroit, Michigan but was raised in a suburb of Detroit called Allen Park. Before he was even 18, Mazeika was already on the road to serving his country. Although his hometown had a strong disdain for motorcycles, Mazeika, and 15 others, bought one anyway. He, along with the 15 others, were arrested and the judge called

the recruiting office. Mazeika was faced with an ultimatum: join the Marine Corps or go to jail for six months. On his first day of basic training in July of 1966, Mazeika and the other recruits were asked by their drill instructor, "Who here voluntarily enlisted?" A few men stepped forward. The drill instructor proceeded to yell at the recruits until every last one of them stepped forward.

Although nowadays recruits can pick their Military Occupational Speciality based on their ASVAB test score, in The Vietnam War era, Marine recruits did not pick. They were handed a rifle first and became a riflemen and then advanced MOS training began based on test scores. After completing the necessary training for radar electronic-counter countermeasure (ECCM) in San Diego, Mazeika became a radar repairmen on Monkey Mountain in Da Nang, Vietnam. Monkey Mountain was the most secure mountain in Vietnam however, it was tore down once it became apparent that The North was winning.

His rebellious spirit preceded him in the service. Despite the fact that anyone stationed on Monkey Mountain was prohibited from the use of cameras, Mazeika still managed to capture a couple pictures. Mazeika was top rank in his unit academically and would be able to get away with small things. Though Marines had to wear their hats on completely, Mazeika would wear his slightly back and was the only one in his unit who would wear his hat like that without any repercussions.

Mazeika had traveled around the country as well as around the world. He was in bootcamp in San Diego, California. The Marine Corps also sent him to North Carolina as well as Okinawa, Japan and Vietnam. He was stationed in Okinawa, Japan for the USMC Air Wing for ECCM as well. Mazeika has a great respect for Okinawa and would take people even though it

was prohibited. Mazeika misappropriated the truck to take his fellow marines. Later, Mazeika was caught and set to serve several years in military years but his proficiency at his MOS made his punishment less harsh: they took away his military license which he never wanted.

On leave, Mazeika visited family and friends. He had an apartment in Anaheim, California and would go there and home (Michigan) on leave. During his service, Mazeika would communicate with his family while in the states but overseas, he would not be able to contact them.

Mazeika was awarded a Navy Commendation Medal for his brave act of protecting a U.S. radar in Okinawa. He, and another Marine, both fought in a blazing fire with a fire extinguisher to prevent the radar from being destroyed. Mazeika's only priority was to protect this radar and neglected his own safety. He, and the other Marine, suffered from burns. Mazeika had only received a certificate for the Metal eight months after being honorably discharged. Along with his certificate came a paper stating that due to the low stock of metals, Mazeika would have to wait until they were back in stock to receive the actual metal. Unfortunately, Mazeika never acquired the actual Metal.

Being in the military changed Mazeika drastically. He saw the world completely different and became more confident and respectful. War had humbled him and he developed a greater appreciation of life. The military shaped Mazeika into the man he is today.