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Period 2

Bruce Pilch
Marine Corps
1966-1969
2018

Bruce Pilch

Veterans are people who deserve utmost respect. They are the brave people who put their life on the line for the freedom and safety of our country. They are considered true heroes, but many of them are humble and see themselves as everyday people. One of these noble veterans is Bruce Pilch, a down to earth veteran who served our country in The Vietnam War.

On August 14th, 1945, in Hollywood CA, Bruce Pilch was born. A coincidence to the day he was born was that August 14th, 1945 is also known as VJ day, the Day Japan surrendered to the Allies in WWII before a formal ceremony of surrendering on Sep 2, 1945. Pilch spent his younger years collecting baseball cards and playing in little league like most kids at the time, he also enjoyed watching movies such as The D.I. starring Jack Webb. He grew up with one older brother and one younger brother, they remain close to this day. Pilch's high school experience was not one he particularly enjoyed. After graduating high school Pilch went to college to be an accountant. Eventually after realizing that wasn't the life for him he decided he needed a fresh start.

Pilch, inspired by the movie The D.I., and by looking for a fresh start, decided to join the Marine Corps. At 21 years old Pilch was now a Marine, starting his service with a 9 week boot camp from July 5th to Sep 15th, 1966. While in boot camp Pilch was given his Military Occupational Specialty which was 0341 Mortarman. November 19th, 1967 was Pilch's first day

in Vietnam. One motto Pilch stuck with is that to overcome what you face you need to adapt to it. Adapting to the types of conflicts he faced in Vietnam made him gain perspective and overall helped him push on through the war. Throughout his time in Vietnam and his buddies joked about the type of C-rations they ate, for example one of the meals they called “Beef steak and Ball Busters.” When he wanted a warm meal or warm coffee he and his friends would use a little ball of C4 to heat them. One of the most dangerous battles of the Vietnam War Pilch was a part of, The Battle of Khe Sahn which was a battle that lasted from Jan 21, 1968 to April 9, 1968. The importance of this battle was stopping the North Vietnamese from pushing into South Vietnam past the demilitarized zone. His first day after the battle ended he decided to enjoy a can of coke and some ice cream. One thing Pilch noticed about the war was that although his group of marines were all different races, it didn’t matter, they all fought for each other and all looked out for each other. When not in combat Pilch spent time with his friends and made many memories such as when he was on a ship his friends and him all ate candy for two whole days. Pilch’s service had not gone unnoticed as he did receive medals for his time in combat. His last place of service was in San Diego in April 1969, it was a relief to be out of combat, and it was time for Pilch to start the next chapter of his life.

America had changed quite a bit since Pilch had last been home, and with all the riots and all the negative stigma towards Vietnam vets it was something that you had to hide. His first 30 days back he stayed home and relaxed. After those 30 days Pilch decided to work with his neighbor by doing landscaping for a year. After saving up some money Pilch decided to buy a multi stop ticket and travel the world with his friend. Pilch was able to see in person amazing pieces of history such as The Great Wall of China, Taj Mahal, The Wailing Wall, and The Berlin Wall. All of these experiences allowed Pilch to really gain perspective on a lot of situations, a

trait he described that all people should try to understand. Once back home Mr. Pilch decided to go to trade school for computers. Eventually Pilch got a job with computer technology, planning on working there for a few years, he ended up working there until he retired. Throughout that time he had one daughter and one son. Pilch now spends his time with veteran organizations, such as every Tuesday he mentors veterans coming from Wars our country participated in recently, and helps these veterans get back on their feet and adjust to society. He also spends his time keeping in touch with his grandchildren and volunteering for the Vietnam Veterans of America organization. Pilch's plans for the future include volunteering for veteran organizations, and soon returning the dog tags of one of his fellow Marines to the family of that Marine since the dog tags were recently found in Vietnam.

Pilch is certainly a memorable man. He served our country for three years, and still to this day continues to make an impact. In people's lives Mr. pilch's advice on anything in life is "you adapt, deal with it, and find something good out of it." An optimistic lookout like this is often hard to find in people, but Pilch lives by it.