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Period 1

Army

Gary Young

1966-1967

2018



Gary Young

The War Veteran Gary Young tells his story of being a Helicopter pilot in the 119th Airborne Pleiku. To Young it was all the same out there in the “field”, Whether it was scouting the “LZ” or flying in alone to save some troops. His Courage and determination is the reason that he's still here today. When Young started he was expecting everything. He was raised in an all military family. He had grown up with his father being a WWII veteran and his brother joining the military after high school. Young decided to go to College at Yale to get an education to prepare for his return from Vietnam.

Before he joined the Army he got married five months prior. Young was only twenty three when he joined. On the day he left, Young wasn't scared he was very excited to have joined “ I was young and I was excited to serve my country and to make some extra money for me and my wife”. Although he was excited his wife was sad to see him go but Young knew he had to do this for his country and for his future, it was the right thing to do. Young did a lot of training at bootcamp to become a helicopter pilot, he was the second lieutenant, when it was time to be stationed he got stationed at Pleiku. When it was time to fight in combat only twenty

percent went into combat while the other eighty percent had to stay to support the others with anything they could, "I was in that twenty percent that went into combat".

When Young was in Pleiku he was either a reconnaissance team dropping off soldiers into battle. Young was fitted with nothing more than two M60 Light machine guns, a little more underpowered than the brother to his Helicopter. "They had rockets, Turrets, and were equipped to the teeth". Young's time in Vietnam was an, "experience he'd never forget". At boot camp he was eating meals called "B Rations" which were not the best tasting meal, but it was enough to refill your energy. Some unlucky soldiers got the C Rations that were left over from WWII, also some soldiers were lucky and got packages from their family with sweets and meals from back home. A Rations were the best meals you could get by with freshly packed meat and "the good stuff" says Young. When Young was out in the heat of war the closest he had come to death was stated "I was on a Reconnaissance mission picking up soldiers from a checkpoint when I heard the ground move, like little ticks in the dirt from gunfire that were right in front of me. If it hadn't of been the wrong placement were the vietcong anticipated where I was going to be I probably wouldn't be here." Encounters with the Vietnam were never safe. Soldiers that he fought with or when he saw them in conflicts were the Korean soldiers. Feared among the American soldiers, The Koreans were some of the most ferocious fighters Young had ever seen.

On October 12, 1967 Young finally returned home to his family and friends, he was grateful he came back because some of the friends he had made had not come back at all. When it was his last day in Vietnam he said "I don't believe anyone could last more than a year out there". Of course with any traumatic experience he was diagnosed with PTSD only fifty years after the war, he also got cancer twice from all the chemicals they used. Even though there are side effects from being in war Young says it was definitely worth it, he has learned to never take anything

for granted and to cherish every moment because you never know if it will be your last. Young still keeps in touch with some of his friends from the war as well.

Gary Young's time in the Army and Vietnam will not go unremembered. His courage and determination are the reasons he is here today. Young has had to go through numerous things not just war, he had to go through having cancer twice in his life. Young has lived a great life not only for himself but for his family and his country.