

Alanah Pearson

Period 1

Isabella Garcia

Period 2

Jess Gomez

Army

1 Year in Service

2018

Jess Gomez

Jess Gomez was born in Fresno, California. He was the youngest of twelve children. Three of his siblings perished before the age of two, leaving him with seven sisters and one brother. Gomez was raised by his single mother. As a child, Gomez picked a variety of fruits such as apricots, plums, garlic, walnuts, and even cotton-- a feat that he accomplished by hand. Gomez left his childhood home in Fresno and moved to Harbor City to live with his brother. Gomez graduated from Narbonne High School in 1965. Soon after graduating, Gomez decided that he wanted to serve in the United States Army.

Every veteran has their own motivation for joining the war and Gomez is no different. Although one may expect someone to join the war with strong conviction and justifications, Gomez— funnily enough— joined under the influence of a movie, Battle of the Bulge-- a movie based on World War II. Of course, this does not make him any less of a person than those with a more serious type of reasoning for enlisting, but it is a different type of motivation than expected— only making his story all the more pleasing.

Considering that his motivation stemmed from a movie, it's important to note that he truly desired to serve as a paratrooper -- just like the main character depicted in the movie -- and yet he was placed to serve under artillery. Of course, in the army, you never really get to pick

what you want to do, and this was his reality. It can be said though, that regardless of his position, he still enjoyed his experiences during his time served.

Bootcamp was an experience that Gomez found challenging yet necessary. While it may be memorable to some, he didn't express any disdain towards it but he certainly wasn't in love with it either. Gomez learned the basic skills that he would need to fight and survive in warfare such as firing a rifle, hand to hand combat, and how to read a map-- which he struggled with. Transporting ten dead bodies in his Armored Personnel Carrier (APC) negatively impacted Gomez to the point where he suppressed his memories of the mission. This, of course, wasn't his only striking story with his APC.

While Gomez never really found himself stressed or scared often during his service, there was one moment during his career that left him shaken. While out on a convoy, Gomez's APC stopped without warning. He was anxious because he and his partner were exposed to potential danger. His accompanying soldier got his gun ready for the worst case scenario while Gomez checked the APC. Luckily, it turns out that it was only a maintenance issue. The person who had checked over his APC the day before had forgotten to tighten the oil cap, causing the cap to pop off and the "trac" (APC) to break down. In response, he simply stuffed a rag with a stick in it to block the leak. Other than this event, he never felt a wave of uneasiness during his service.

Of course, Gomez inevitably witnessed an act of stupidity during his service. The exact same day his unit learned about grenades, a few soldiers from his unit fooled around with the explosive, detonating the bomb which resulted in three deaths.

Arguments and fights were not too common in his unit because everyone was focused on doing their jobs. However, there was one instance when Gomez found himself in a heated

argument that almost resulted in a fight. Thankfully, tensions de-escalated and things did not go any further.

While the army consisted of many people, his friends only consisted of those in his artillery unit. Gomez recalls two nice gestures received from his unit members. His Section Chief, Sgt. Youngblood, introduced Gomez to a bizarre concoction that included yellow jack chili's, sardines, and saltine crackers. Gabriel, another friend of Gomez, shared a care package filled with beans, tortillas, etc. which reminded Gomez of home. Although the friendships that Gomez formed while in the army were somewhat short-termed, he often wonders how his friends are today.

Despite the perils of war, Gomez and his friends found sources of entertainment. One particular event that was entertaining was when his friends tried to pull the hand-in-water prank while he slept, hoping to make Gomez pee himself. However, this trick had failed on Gomez when he immediately woke up. Other than pranks, many soldiers found entertainment in singing songs, playing cards, and even drinking a little-- but never enough to get themselves drunk. Gomez, however, found amusement in a tape recorder he had. Whenever he was placed on guard duty, he would record the sounds around him as well as sounds he made himself. He would play it back and find himself laughing. It was something he enjoyed and did to pass the time. He currently no longer has that tape recorder, but he wishes he still did.

Gomez completed his service with honor. The only regret he has was not returning for a second tour. When returning to the United States, Gomez and his fellow servicemen/servicewomen were sadly ridiculed and labeled "baby killers" instead of heroes. Gomez, refused to allow the nasty comments to affect him, instead he chose to appreciate his

blessings and the little things in life such as having a roof over his head, food, water, and much more.

Jess Gomez, a veteran of the Vietnam War, served one proud tour in the foreign country that lasted for a year. While he did not stay for long, he made many memories during his time spent in Vietnam— some better than others. His overall experience is one that he can never forget. After completing his tour and returning home, Gomez went to a dance club with his old high school buddy, Frank. At that dance club, he met his wife. He and his wife, Alice had one son named Eric that gave him two grandchildren-- Anthony and Breeanna.

Gomez, is currently involved in three Vietnam Veteran groups, Vietnam Veterans of America, VFW of Mexican Ancestry, and VFW 12034 “Band of Brothers”. He resides in Pomona, California with Alice, his son, and grandson. Gomez, loves spending time with his granddaughter, Breeanna, who he refers to as the love of his life. With his experiences and learnings from being in the Vietnam War, Jess Gomez is much more appreciative of everything in his life.