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Joseph & Jody Helter

Army, Navy, & Air Force

Joseph 20 years

Jody 22 years

2018



Joseph and Jody Helter

You never know what something is like until you yourself experience it first hand. There may be words to describe what it feels like to be out there and to be traveling around the world not knowing if you will be coming home. There are no words to describe your racing heartbeat and adrenaline rush when you are out in combat or even in bootcamp. Listening to people's stories about their time in the military can only give you a glimpse of what they experienced, the emotions could never be recreated by someone who has never done this.

Joseph Helter decided to join the military to support his family and his young daughter Jody Helter. They were originally from Nebraska when he volunteered into the military. He served all over, there was no specific area where he stayed, he moved about every couple years. Joseph started out in the Army where he was ranked E5 and eventually moved to the Air Force where he was ranked E6. In the Army Joseph described the conditions as terrible, he says that there he "learned to be a professional killer." When he was in the military they had developed theaters of operation. Joseph's job unit was infantry, which are soldiers fighting on foot. He remembers one battle where they were in the back of a truck and "all of a sudden shells start flying over you." Joseph traveled from Thailand to the states and back. He received a 15 day leave where he hitchhiked and took planes from Thailand to Alaska to Lincoln just to take his wife to her high school reunion. Joseph says that throughout time in the military you "see a

lot of things in your life that you wouldn't see out here." Since Joseph joined the military in an earlier time he did not have social media and many electronics to contact his family. He sent many letters and cassettes back home. When Joseph's service ended in the Army, it was hard to get work. When his service ended with the Air Force he went back to Arkansas and eventually retired at March Air Base. "I'll go back in today. I'll go right back in no problem."

Jody Helter joined the military like most of her family did. She attended college and received her Associates and Bachelors. She wanted to be a teacher but the military was something she really wanted to do. She joined the Navy and was ranked E5. Jody was a personnelman which was a job where you take care of service records. Jody's theater of operation was in the middle east in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. Jody explains boot camp as "definitely an eye opener." She says they immediately come in yelling and ordering them to do things. She says they were constantly cleaning and everything needs to be absolutely perfect. Some of their clothes even had to be folded to fit to the size of a dollar bill. She says that it may be hard but "that's what they are trying to teach you: discipline." In bootcamp they were taught how to fight a fire and patch a hole. They had to be prepared for chemical warfare and be able to handle gases that can shut down your body. Jody says the military is "prideful" and "it's another world." Jody joined the war later so it was easier to communicate with her family because of social media and electronics. They had e-mail, care boxes, and calling cards. Jody had a stuffed dog named Burley that she kept with her, it had no specific meaning but she liked the American flag bandana that it had. Jody's main duty was in the Middle East doing contraband control, they collected many things that soldiers would try to bring in that were prohibited like liquor and handguns. Unfortunately, Jody had to have multiple surgeries and she was released on medical. "Absolutely positive I'd do it again in a heartbeat." In the end, Joseph and Judy both were in the military but had very different experiences. They are both amazing people who deserve all of the thanks in the world and people could never appreciate them enough for what they did for this country.

