

Baird Amanda, Goldberg Gage

Period 5

Kerry Proctor

US Army, 4 years

US Navy, 22 years

March 16, 2018



Kerry Proctor

Mr. Kerry Proctor is but one of the millions of brave men and women who we owe much more than a thank you to. While they may not see themselves as heroes, there is no better word to describe them. If not for these brave souls, the world would be a very different place and the American way of life would cease to exist. Mr. Proctor's story, along with millions like it, are essential in defining and maintaining how the U.S. runs and exists. These stories must be documented and survive the test of time so that they can be known and thanked for milenia, although thank you are far from adequate after what he has done for 22 years selflessly for his country.

Born in August of 1965 at Fort Dix, New Jersey, Kerry Proctor is a second generation american hero with 22 years of years of service in the United States Armed Forces who joined in order to continue his family's legacy along with his two brothers, nephew and his son in law, making his family 3 generations of heroes. During his 22 years, Kerry Proctor served in every part of the world but the Mediterranean.

As a kid, he always looked up to his dad , and felt that it was his duty to follow in his footsteps. This, he perceived to be his main reason for joining the military, he wanted the same pride, patriotism, and honor that went with serving in the United States military. Just like his dad and Mr. Proctor, his two brothers chose the same path and enlisted as well.

Kerry Proctor spent a large amount of his life in the military. When recalling on his first few weeks in the military, he sums it up by mentioning that they were the first time he was away from home and were often really difficult, adding that it was a bit scary and often took two-three weeks to adjust. To help explain this to us he told us that the military trainers tried “break your spirit”, for lack of a better term, and then build you back up as a group. He says “the military often brings you together” that this training was necessary to him and his team to rely on each other and feel more like a family atmosphere. With joining the military shortly after he graduated high school he served about three years in the Army - 1985 to 1988, and then about 17 more years in the Navy - 1990 to 2007, he spent an estimate of around twenty-two years in the United States military. Mr. Proctor’s service consisted of tours in Afghanistan and Iraq during the Iraqi war, including Operation Desert Storm and Desert Shield, where he was awarded two combat action ribbons.

After serving in the army for 3 years, Mr. Proctor took 2 years out of the armed service as an army reserve member. Following this two year break, Mr. Procter joined the U.S. Navy. He swapped branches of the armed forces as he wished to continue his service but didn’t like being in the dirty field. Kerry continued his service for 17 years in the U.S. Navy as a Special Operations Specialist, tracking air to service activity in order to brief special forces, planes and landing crafts on what to expect upon leaving the ship on a mission. He also planned strategies for the men to achieve their objectives safely. Lastly he took pride in training his men by hand. While on his first ship, Fort McHenry, the senior members trained him very hands on and welcomed him into the ship as a family. This is something he aimed to reproduce so he took time training people in Attached Wing Veitidias and taking them to the range for practice with his preferred weapons, an M4A1 firing 5.56X45mm NATO rounds and his 9mm Glock 40.

In order to cope with the stress often brought on by the service, Mr. Proctor says that every soldier kept a picture of his or her loved ones on them at all times, whether its their wife, girlfriend or kids. He also shared that his family has a tradition to throw a BBQ before every deployment. At the end of the BBQ, the men took something from the BBQ to remind them of home. While on the ship, sailors like to entertain themselves by playing little tricks on each other. One of Kerry's most memorable jokes was telling new recruits to look for a "CGU11" off the stern of the ship. After the recruits ran around for a while confused, the officer would write down what he wanted as a "seagull". They also entertained and de-stress each other by exchanging stories from their unit with other units, working out, reading and watching movies. Proctor recalls that during one tour he spent six months reading the entire bible front and back.

Mr. Proctor's most memorable and worse moment happened during his last tour in Afghanistan. Before leaving for deployment to this tour, he went to a BBQ with one of his fellow officers. While at dinner, his mom meet up with them and asked Mr. Proctor to watch out for her son and bring him home alive. While on deployment, Proctor and his troops were out on the field and got caught in a fire fight with talibans. The troops had to take cover and return fire to avoid losing the unit. The young man he was asked to watch over was at his side during this fight. When the fighting ended and Proctor called for his men to cease fire, he looked over to the young man to find that he was hit by 7.62 X 29mm (AK47/74 round) in the head. The round pierced his helmet and went clean through him, leaving his slumped body on Proctor's shoulder. Returning home and telling his mom that her son would not be returning was one of the hardest things Proctor had to do outside of combat.

When ending a career in the military is often a big decision and one you won't forget. Mr. Proctor still remembers what his last day in the service was like. He says that he was never a

flashy person, and didn't want the attention that a retirement celebration would bring. He remembers walking out of the base for the last time and crying as it is a very emotional experience to end. Overall, though, he is highly grateful to be back with his family and enjoying life at home once again.

The largest change between military and civilian life was workplace discipline. After returning from service he was hired for a management position where he was in charge of telling workers what tasks to complete. In the military, after you ask someone under you to do something once, you start yelling at them. In a civilian work place this is not acceptable and he was frequently told off by HR for yelling at people. Technology was a huge help in adjusting to society as it allowed Proctor to stay in touch with other people he served with, buddies who returned to homes throughout the U.S. Proctor is not actively part of any veteran program as most people in them just want to drink and exchange stories. Following the war, Proctor stopped drinking as it only brought back his bad memories. After ending his service by serving in South America performing anti drug operations, Proctor also firmed up his beliefs against drugs, never taking them in his life.

Mr. Proctor has a son, in the military, and is glad to be back home and adjusting more and more back to the daily life of a civilian. He feels he is happy with his service and would not change anything if he had the chance to go back and do it all over again. He is a highly respected and honorable veteran, the recipient of numerous awards and medals celebrating his good conduct and many years he was in the military. Right now, he enjoys going to reunions of his crew, and especially looking forward to the one will be attending in June, with the crew of the USS Dubuque.

At the end of our interview, we asked him what his opinions were on the military today. Mr. Proctor replied saying that he sees the military being run as more of a business than a military force. He does not believe new recruits are trained adequately enough and are sent in unprepared mentally for the high stress, dangerous world they are entering. More missions are being handed off to Special Forces like SEAL teams than ever before and more average soldier is losing their life or mind on the battlefield. The number of soldiers returning with extreme PTSD is skyrocketing from when he and his dad served and the men seem to be getting disillusioned with the mission of the war. Everything seems to be based off of political stunts and isn't getting much done. It is a shame that we are losing our great veterans and our new generation of heroes are not getting the same level of training to continue on their legacies.

On behalf of myself, my group, King Highschool and the rest of the grateful nation, thank you Kerry Proctor for sharing your story with us and thank you for your service. Without heroes like you, there would be no way for us to live life the way we chose.