

At the age of twenty-one, Joe Rogers Jr. was drafted into the United States army. He was a soldier in the army from 1965 to 1967. Although he was stationed and trained in Fort Dix, New Jersey he was called to the Vietnam war as a radio operator. This was not the job he was hoping for!

President Lyndon B. Johnson issued a draft, ordering all men from the ages of eighteen to twenty-six years old to serve in the Vietnam war. Going to Vietnam meant that my grandfather would have to quit his job and leave his friends and family behind. This worried him because he was the one that his family depended on every day. Although he was upset and was not even interested in going to the military the draft required him to go.

My grandfather did not know that he was going to the Vietnam war. He thought that he was just going in case they needed more soldiers for any reason. Once he arrived in Fort Dix, NJ and after he started training, is when he found out that he would be leaving the United States to serve in the Vietnam War. The war was going to take place in Long Ben, South Vietnam. He was in shock! He did not see this coming.

His job assignment in the army was as a Radio Operator. The army was responsible for making sure he was trained well for this position. To be a radio operator in the army, you must know Morse code, a way of communicating with strange sounds so that the enemy didn't know what was being said. You must also know how to operate the radio equipment properly. At first, he thought that it would be pretty hard task to handle. He was responsible for communication between the branches (Navy, Army, Air force, Marines) of the military. The branches of the military used radio communication to keep in contact with each other. It was very important for everyone to know what was happening and what needed to be done. At the time, radio operators were being paid only \$95.00 per month and he usually worked about 40 hours a week. Although

it doesn't seem like a lot of money, back then, it was plenty. This was helpful because it allowed him to continue to take care of his family by sending money home whenever he was paid.

To serve in the war, my grandfather had to know how to use a variety of weapons, even though he was only equipped with a rifle. He did not need a lot of information with shooting a rifle because his father taught him how to shoot rifles and guns while he was a young boy like me. I asked my grandfather if he had killed anyone in the Vietnam war. He said he did not know, but I am not so sure that is the truth. I think he just doesn't want anyone to know that dirty little secret.

Back then, when my grandfather was in the army, there was no segregation. However, black and white people weren't always treated the same, but they were supposed to be. There were even some fights between the black and white soldiers, but it didn't happen all of the time. The good thing was that even though they didn't always get along black and white soldiers were paid the same in the war, at least if they had the same rank.

There were hospitals where the war took place just in case any soldiers were injured. Thank goodness my grandfather was never injured and did not need to go into a hospital but he just barely escaped danger when it was near. Like the time the Vietcong blew up the building that held the ammunition supply. This happened only less than a quarter mile away from his barracks! According to my grandfather, this was the scariest moment of his life. So he prays every morning to thank the Lord for his life.

Although he did not want to enlist in the army, he is grateful that he did. Being in the army taught him many lessons about being a man. The strictness of the army him taught discipline and how to respect others. He is also a hard worker, and he thanks the army for that too. He takes great pride in having served his country in helping to protect the citizens of the

United States of America, something that not everyone is brave enough to do.