

Opportunist

Very frequently throughout the year, when I particularly think long and hard about the 58,000+ families that are respecting their lost husbands, fathers, sons, and brothers of the Vietnam War; I want to point out that while technically a veteran, I was actually an **opportunist**. My time in the Navy was an opportunity and a dodge. Therefore, I don't count my time in the service as that of a "service"-man. Here in Poway, even though I was at times a very close neighbor; I was never a member of the VFW, nor the Fleet Reserve Association #70. I do highly respect both organizations for the support and comradery they provide those that did sacrifice and served.

I grew up with the Vietnam war throughout my younger years, age 5 through 25, which also covered just over half of my time in the Navy. I was very much aware of the war, as it was the first topic on the national news night after night, as I was playing with my toys on the living room floor. It nearly always summarized the number of soldiers killed in action along with those that had their lives altered forever. Later, my classmates and I lived with the full knowledge of the draft hanging over our projections of what we were going to be confronted with upon graduation. And what we were going to do.

In my early teens, I started to focus very much on what becoming an 18-year-old was going to confront me with. My parents' plans for me were fully focused on a College Draft deferment. That entire thought trend started at the age of 12 and seventh grade with the Cuban Missile Crisis, when duck and cover drills were held in my Jr. High School (Middle School) classes. The reality of deadly consequences of armed conflict became a reality and "run and hide" just didn't fit with me. But I also didn't want to put my life in jeopardy. I started to pay attention to those people who were older than I was but were not in the category of "parents".

A key influencer was listening to my future brother-in-law following his graduation from Brown University. He did not go into industry following graduation, as others in his graduating class did; they, having avoided the draft. He instead joined the Navy through the Officer Commissioning School (OCS) program. And later took his Officer position in the Combat Intelligence Center (CIC) on the USS Okinawa. He did this just in time for the Dominican Crisis of 1965, specifically just before my 15th birthday. The stories he told upon his return and what he had learned about a special group within the Navy, via the operationally critical information in the CIC center left a long and lasting impression. But, he was a supervisor, not a doer.

The final influencer was a friend of mine in High School – the head guy of our little group. He was two years older than me, and he joined the Navy to avoid going to Vietnam by joining what he called a well-protected group of sailors responsible for police work. Which prepared him well for his later career as a policeman. I later learned that the position was "Shore Patrol". But the stories he told were not lost. My big take away was to join the Navy to avoid the draft. Join the Navy to take control of your own direction. And join the Navy to use their testing and placement process to obtain a job with a future, that was fascinating in the interim.

So that is what I did.

There are stories within my eBook [SeeStories](#), where I explain some things about Vietnam where I am focused on my accomplishments and observations that may appear heartless for the true Vietnam era Veterans. An example of this is "[Vietnam Service Ribbon with two Stars](#)". While it is true, that I have such a medal, I did not EARN it as other Vietnam Era Veterans did. I manipulated the organization to my benefit > more pay, without focus on what the Medal would eventually imply. I also watched as I was surrounded with great guilt those who did suffer the consequences of warfare on a "[MAC Flight](#)". Now then both stories specifically mentioned here illustrate my opportunistic vantage point and not that of a true Service Veteran. I believe this position and story explain the rationale behind the fact that I am not a member of any Veteran's Group. I was an opportunist – and I don't measure up to those that sacrificed a great deal more than I was willing to do.