

War Veteran Interview

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Joshua Hardesty

Anthony DeBerry enlisted in the Army of June, 2008, for various reasons: the GI Bill, to learn French, the enlistment bonus (which he notes the Army had the best bonus at that time), and most notably because it is a family legacy. DeBerry's father served in the Army for 23 years.

DeBerry remembers his first days in the Army as a chaotic experience. He went days being sleep deprived only leading to confusion. It was like, "Drill Sergeants trying to herd cats." Leaving Taylorsville, Utah for Fort Jackson, South Carolina, the 100 percent humidity in addition to 110 degree days only made his basic training harder. He explained those days consisted of intense physical activity, but he did not elaborate any further on his training exercises. During basic training, communication consisted of letters and only one 10 minute phone call per week. After leaving South Carolina he headed to Fort Huachuca, Arizona. "Once I got to Ft. Huachuca it was a lot less intense, but still hard. The biggest thing was computer, phone, and internet access. Communication and entertainment made it so much easier."

DeBerry's military career has consisted of serving missions in Morocco, Africa. He went there as a French linguist and luckily did not have to experience any combat nor did he see any casualties in his unit. While in Morocco, he was able to remain in touch through internet use. I asked how he would pass time, to which he replied, "Drinking, video games or movies for the most part." Pranks also played a part in passing the time. He remembers running through the barracks using air horns on sleeping soldiers.

For sustenance, meals ready to eat (MRE's) were the primary source. He described them being similar to, "canned dog food for humans." He was never able to identify the ingredients of the MRE's. DeBerry explained he would never have traveled to Morocco had it not been for the

Army. He fell in love with it so much that he intends to visit again, and eventually he wants to retire there.

One of his most memorable moments during his service came when he was promoted to Sergeant. To put it simply DeBerry said, “When I got promoted to Sergeant that was awesome; not so much for me, but seeing the pride that my dad got from it.”

Anthony is still in the service, but explained that after leaving Morocco and coming off of active duty, he came back to a culture shock. He did not elaborate any further on this. Though he is no longer on active duty he does have friendships that have continued on. I asked if he liked everyone he served with and his reply was, “The people I serve with are a second family to me. Just like with all family I may not like them all, but I’d do just about anything for them.”

The military has shaped Anthony into the man he is today. He has learned to take pride in everything he does. He notes that discipline and conviction are also two key factors he’s taken away from his service. His discipline is being exemplified by using the GI Bill to go back to school with intentions of entering the IT field.

In closing the interview he wanted to let readers know two things, “Blame the government, not the soldier – and if I can do it, anyone can.”

This interview also showcased Anthony’s discipline. Due to living in San Francisco during the time of the interview we were forced to correspond through e mail. He was eager to help, and when I sent him my questions he answered just about each question in a prompt time. I was surprised to find out he hadn’t been deployed to either Afghanistan or Iraq, and this was due to my poor assumption that all soldiers were being placed on the battlefield in some fashion or another. The movies do not portray French linguists being sent to Morocco.

I appreciated Anthony saying, “Blame the government, not the soldier.” This is something Americans need to remember. Some of us may not agree with war, but if it weren’t for the soldiers who volunteer to enlist, I believe it is safe to say that we would all be facing a mandatory draft.

I was afraid of possibly offending Anthony with some of the questions I asked, but he was extremely willing to answer just about everything. I had explained that if there was anything too personal to share that he should not feel obligated to answer. Pre-interview he described himself as an “open book.” I imagine this may have been different had he experienced the battlefield.