

# 1957 Army Vet

## Service:

He served in the United States Army, from 1957 to 1959. He fought in “ the Cold War, and thankfully we never really fought the Cold War. We won it without having to kill anyone ourselves.” He was stationed in Germany. Since he was in Europe “I went to Paris several times, I went to Denmark, I went to Rome, I spent 10 Days in London. I took advantage. Maybe there was 20% or 30% of the military that were troublemakers, but they saw all of us like that. We were seen as bad to the Germans, just how every German was a Nazi in WWII every American is a recluse.” He said that during that time “everybody was in the army or the Navy or something and it was part of life, that was the same for my father’s generation as well.”

While in retirement he was called back by “John F Kennedy, and then he called me back into The Reserves for about 60 days because he had a problem with the Russian Missile Crisis.”

## Assignment:

He said “It was a different military back then. They gave you a job and you never really completed it. You’d get 50 different jobs.” He mentioned that he was a mechanic for a while, but would also be told to spend “hours peeling potatoes add digging ditches”

## Transition:

Right after I got out of the army, the jobs I would work were all day and then I’d go out and work and then the three or four hours and another job. When he first came home, he lived with his mother and father for about “6 months” and then just moved out “like anyone else” and started working other jobs until he started his own business with the help of his family. But a few years later, “Kennedy called me back to the Reserves and it destroyed my business.” During the Cold War “American and the Russian army were 100 yards away from each other overseas, just in case anything was going to happen (a retaliation) from either side, the army was already there. But what that meant is that for anything that needed done domestically they always called in a bunch of veterans for as little as 10 hours sometimes. Nobody remembers that except the vets.” At that time, it was really easy to get out of the military if you really wanted to, you could get a general service discharge instead of an honorable discharge. If you get 2 court marshals and then “your out.” But a lot of people were looking for a pension so then they would have to stay in.

## Physical/Mental Challenges:

He said that he never really had any due to the lack of fighting he did. But “there was a time that this piece of machinery fell on my hand and they took me to the “hospital,” and they said they were going to cut off my finder, but I just left. I wanted my finder. And so, my one finger has always been kind of deformed. Until one day, 20 years after, the piece of bone just kind of broke off and I flipped my finger back into place and I have been fine ever since.”

## Benefits:

He didn’t get any benefits. Said that he didn’t need any help, but when he was in The Reserves, for the little bit of time, he did use the accommodations they had such as the food and the housing and all the benefits that come with being in the military.

### Time Being Homeless:

There wasn't a theme of people who were homeless, "just like any other place there's a bunch of good guys and a bunch of bad guys" But becoming homeless was a "total accident, had nothing to do with me ever being in the military" – directly at least. The reason he fell into homelessness was because "I'm approaching 80 and they raised my rent, so I got another place to transfer to for cheaper. So, I lost the first apartment and went to go to the other place, but they wouldn't allow me to live there anymore because I didn't have a job. Even though I could pay the rent, that for some reason didn't matter to them." It all happened when everyone from California was moving to Denver, so the prices went "sky high." He's been homeless for 2 1/2 years, but mostly it was spending money that I saved up. Because as soon as you don't have that comfort of a home it's hard to keep money. When it started snowing it got pretty miserable, but there aren't any "stages of homelessness like people think." Because back then being a veteran wasn't that big of a deal. Like I saluted the flag, but I'm just like every other American at that time. Because being a veteran was something almost everyone did at some point in their life.

### Stigma/Myths:

The idea that every homeless person is an alcoholic and drug addict is just fishing. You know I haven't had a drink for eight years and 11 months and some and I've never taken drugs, or you know never is a big word but I'm not a druggie. And that's most people that are homeless, they aren't into drugs or alcohol

### Biggest Change:

Not having people tell you what to do every day. I had to figure out what to do myself yeah that was hard. And a lot of people don't want to go down in job title. They may have been able to do higher trained things in the military, but when they got out they had to work at a restaurant like everyone else.

### Veteran Perception:

"What do you think of carpenters? You don't really think about him much. That's my view of thinking of veterans, they are just people. I don't think they should be given anything, when I was in the service people were people in the army and then would come home that was it. But after Vietnam they started trying to make up for all the stuff that veterans had to go through with that. I've done many things in my life. I've designed 2000 buildings and I'm 83 years old, I have done so many things and the army was just one of them. It's like saying I'm going to judge you based on your junior high school years. You would say that those years were just a small portion of your life and you've done so much since then. That's exactly what I think. I was just a warm body; I treat it like a job that I had for a few years."