

Saluting Our Veterans: Pete Despres



by Nate
Winkler

This is the first installment our new feature, Saluting Our Veterans, where we will spotlight local South Coast residents who have honorably served in the military.

Name: Pete Despres

Branch of Service (Active/Reserve): Army Active Duty

Years of Service: 4 (1984-1988)

Primary/Secondary MOS: Infantry (Dragon Gunner)

Nate Winkler: What was the motivating factor for you deciding to serve your country by joining the military?

Peter Despres: My family has a tradition of military service. My father was in the Army, as were my grandparents, and various uncles, cousins, and other family members. I grew up thinking that joining the service was just what a man was supposed to do when he got out of school.

Briefly describe your career/service path (Boot Camp, Duty Stations, Etc.)

Peter: I went to basic training in Fort Benning, GA, as all Army infantrymen do. Then I was assigned to the 7th Infantry Division at Fort Ord, in Seaside, CA (The 7th I.D. was the first "light" Infantry Division in the Army.) I spent about three years there, then did a one-year tour with the 1st Armored Division in Vilseck, Germany, before rotating back to the United States as a civilian at the end of my commitment.



Peter Despre

Which duty station/deployment were you most and least fond of and why?

Peter: I was fortunate enough to travel to a lot of interesting places including Korea, Hawaii, Panama, Germany, and various places throughout the States. I enjoyed my time in Panama and Hawaii the most, for obvious reasons, and I probably was least fond of the time I spent doing a training exercise in Arkansas. Nothing against Arkansas, but there wasn't much going on there at the time.

Did you participate in combat operations? If so could you describe?

Peter: The U.S. wasn't involved in any conflicts during my years of service.

Which individual from your service stands out as the one who had the biggest impact on you and why?

Peter: I went to basic training and my first unit with a man named Scott Barkalow. We became great friends, and remained in touch after I got out of the Army. Scott decided to make a career out of it, and he eventually ending up in the Special Forces. In February of 2003, his vehicle hit an anti-tank mine in Afghanistan, severing his right leg from the knee down. His positive attitude, courage, and spirit are inspirational and I'm glad to call him my friend and my brother-in-arms.

How did your military service affect the way you have approached your life and career?

Peter: First and foremost, being in the Army taught me the importance of being physically fit. I make every effort to run and workout three times a week. Second, and maybe most importantly, I understand how to deal with adversity and hardship, both physically as well as mentally. Being a soldier, even in peacetime, exposes you to difficult situations, and you learn that you are capable of far more than you ever realized. The responsibility, discipline, and fortitude that the Army required and demanded of me has helped in virtually every aspect of my life.

Thank you Pete for serving our country, and for taking the time to share your story with us. Readers, if you see Pete out on the town, buy him a pint and ask him to tell you his communist Germany train ride story... It's a keeper.

Are you or someone you know a military veteran that would like to be recognized? Let us know by dropping us a line at info@newbedfordguide.com. Any branch of service, wartime or peace, young or old: Every Veteran has a story worth telling.