

## VETERANS UPWARD BOUND - ALWAYS HERE FOR YOU!

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## Special Veterans Day Issue



“The highest obligation and privilege of citizenship is that of bearing arms for one’s country.”

General George S. Patton Jr.

**You served.  
Let us serve  
YOU!**

## A Message From Our Chancellor

When November 11th was officially named Veterans Day, United States President Dwight D. Eisenhower called upon all citizens to join to “solemnly remember the sacrifices of all those who fought so valiantly on the seas, in the air, and on foreign shores, to preserve our heritage of freedom. Today, US troops continue to serve with sacrifice, dedication, and honor all around the world. UNM-Taos is proud to serve as the host institution for New Mexico Veterans Upward Bound, ensuring that our veterans who have made many personal sacrifices are also pursuing an education and using resources designed specifically for them. As your chancellor, I thank you for your service to your country and your commitment to those you served alongside. I also commend you for pursuing your education and working hard to train for your future.

Education represents power, hope, and change. John F. Kennedy said, “Let us think of education as the means of developing our greatest abilities, because in each of us there is a private hope and dream which, fulfilled, can be translated into benefit for everyone and greater strength for our nation.” Thank you to all of the veterans served by Veterans Upward Bound. You and your service are valued.

Mary Gutierrez, Ed. D  
Chancellor, UNM Taos



TAOS



# *We are Veterans*

We left home as teenagers for an unknown adventure.  
We loved our country enough to defend it and protect it with our own lives.  
We said goodbye to friends and family and everything we knew.  
We learned the basics and then we scattered in the wind to the far corners of the Earth.  
We found new friends and new family.  
We became brothers and sisters regardless of color, race or creed.  
We had plenty of good times, and plenty of bad times.  
We didn't get enough sleep.  
We smoked and drank too much.  
We picked up both good and bad habits.  
We worked hard and played harder.  
We didn't earn a great wage.  
We experienced the happiness of mail call and the sadness of missing important events.  
We didn't know when, or even if, we were ever going to see home again.  
We grew up fast, and yet somehow, we never grew up at all.  
We fought for our freedom, as well as the freedom of others.  
Some of us saw actual combat, and some of us did not.  
Some of us saw the world, and some of us did not.  
Some of us dealt with physical warfare, most of us dealt with psychological warfare.  
We have seen and experienced and dealt with things that we can't fully describe or explain, as not all of our sacrifices were physical.  
We participated in time-honored ceremonies and rituals with each other, strengthening our bonds and camaraderie.  
We counted on each other to get our job done, and sometimes to survive it at all.  
We have dealt with victory and tragedy.  
We have celebrated and mourned.  
We lost a few along the way.  
When our adventure was over, some of us went back home, some of us started somewhere new and some of us never came home at all.  
We have told amazing and hilarious stories of our exploits and adventures.  
We share an unspoken bond with each other, that most people don't experience, and few will understand.  
We speak highly of our own branch of service, and poke fun at the other branches.  
We know however, that, if needed, we will be there for our brothers and sisters and stand together as one, in a heartbeat.  
Being a veteran is something that had to be earned, and it can never be taken away.  
It has no monetary value, but at the same time it is a priceless gift.  
People see a veteran and they thank them for their service.  
When we see each other, we give that little upwards head nod, or a slight smile, knowing that we have shared and experienced things that most people have not.  
So, from myself to the rest of the veterans out there, I commend and thank you for all that you have done and sacrificed for your country.  
Try to remember the good times and forget the bad times.

Veterans Day, celebrated annually in the U.S. on November 11th, is a chance to honor the men and women who have served our country. Since it's all about veterans, we thought this year we'd allow our New Mexico veterans to speak for themselves. All following content has been submitted by prior military service members. We bring this to you with gratitude and pride. We hope you enjoy what they've shared with us.



*New Mexico Veterans Upward Bound would like to sincerely thank all those who answered our call for submissions for inclusion in this special Veterans Day issue of the newsletter.*





# On Being a Veteran

For several days, I pondered the meaning of being a veteran of the military of the United States until about forty-eight hours ago. Then the world seemed to suddenly crash in on me. Two incidents took place which made me realize what I'd experienced just a few moments ago, were a reflection and very real test, of the lessons I learned during my long years in the military. In anticipation of a much-needed surgical procedure, I had a Covid-19 test completed which came back positive. This despite my having taken all preventive measures by submitting to all of the initial vaccine injections and three boosters! In view of the initial fear and then the sudden onset of Covid-19 symptoms, I contemplated once again after all these years that I could possibly lose my life. I was feeling rather sorry for myself. Then one morning recently I received a call from someone in true crisis who was with a mental health counselor who'd organized and moderated the call. This person was in a prolonged state of agony and informed me they had been kidnapped as a child and didn't even know where their place of birth was. This individual was homeless and had no relatives to reach out to for comfort, aid and compassion. They were assuredly alone in the world with no one to call. I realized all human beings go through hard times and that a military veteran is someone who must face his/her fears and drive forward no matter what the situation. For the first time in years, and after this call, I broke down in tears and I am not hesitant to admit that.

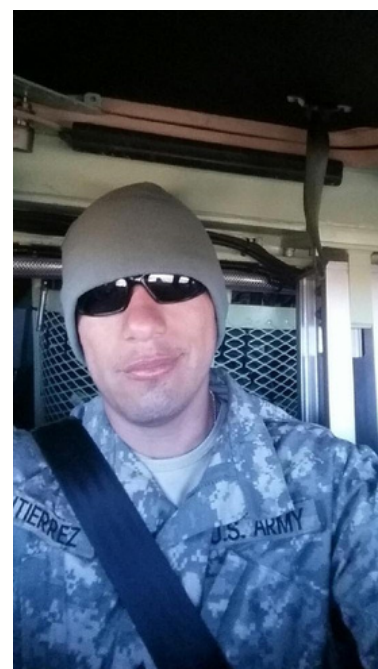
I was in such a state, my spouse had to remind me of the dangers I'd faced as a soldier all those decades ago, and that I must not now succumb to my fears. To be perfectly honest, I came close to caving in for a few moments, but my spouse's admonishment reminded me once again that an old Army medic such as myself must face the extreme possibilities with courage and commitment. I was taught to put my fear and personal terrors in their place. With that in mind, I ascertain that being a military service veteran means that "WE" are the ones this country counts upon to face our fears with courage, care, compassion and absolute commitment to the lives of others. I admit I remain afraid for myself and for the life and future of this person who called yesterday, but I will not let the specter of fear keep me from driving on and doing my duty. I hope I will never let anyone down in the future and remember that being a veteran of the military involves courage and commitment. I have been reminded once again and very forcefully just who and what a veteran should be.

I thank you for taking a moment to read this. I can only hope that I will always and from this day forward live up to my vision of what a military veteran is and never let another human being fall without reaching out to provide aid and assistance.

Matthew Wohlberg, US Army, SFC, Ret.

So, growing up, I have always heard "Grandpo", who served in the Korean War as a medic with the 45th Infantry Division, say there was no better feeling than service to your county. His favorite quote is from President John F. Kennedy, "ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country." I wanted to challenge myself and serve my country, so in 2012, I joined the New Mexico National Guard's 919th Military Police Unit. I served six years in the National Guard and loved every minute of it. I had a hard time separating from the military in 2018, and it took me a little bit to find another way to serve my community. In 2020, I joined the Cibola Search and Rescue Team here in Albuquerque. During my two years, I have met great people and some are veterans, which we immediately bonded. The jokes and comradery we share makes everything we do worth it. Hopefully, one day, I can pass this on to my son.

Jason Gutierrez, SP4, New Mexico Army National Guard







**Julio A. Alfaro  
Veteran, U.S. Army  
Sergeant-At-Arms  
American Legion Post 16  
Taos, New Mexico 87571**





Rio Grande Autumn  
Original photograph by Richard L. Rieckenberg  
US Navy, LCDR, Ret.



# One Woman's Experience in the Military

I was eighteen years old when I enlisted in the U.S. Army. My family thought I was *nuts* at the time. No one had enlisted in the military in my immediate family for decades but especially no women in the family. Some of my uncles had been drafted during the Vietnam War and my father served in the Marine Corps during the Korean Conflict but that was an alternative handed down by a juvenile court judge...either go to jail for stealing hubcaps or enlist in the Marines! No one understood my choice to enlist in the Army.

I wish I could say I was motivated by extreme patriotism but the truth is I saw an ad in Cosmopolitan magazine. It depicted a young woman in fatigues standing in a field with a German castle in the background. I enlisted because I wanted to travel! I spoke with an Army Recruiter and of course he promised me the world (and a tour in Germany) if I'd sign on the dotted line. Luckily, the Army Intelligence Command was in need of German linguists at the time. ***So, eventually I did get to Germany!***

Off I went to Boot Camp where I encountered many other women of all ages, races, ethnic backgrounds, and motivation for joining the service. One woman was in her early thirties. Her husband had passed away unexpectedly and she enlisted to be able to support their young son. As a single parent, she'd had to relinquish parental custody to her mother during Basic Training and AIT. Another young lady was drop-dead gorgeous and could easily have gone into modeling but chose to do something more meaningful. One of the girls in my platoon, from a small town in Oklahoma, joined the Army to avoid the expectation she would marry a local farmer's son and "settle down".

A couple of ladies were from large cities along the Eastern seaboard and had few job prospects. One had recently lost her father, graduated from college with a degree in English Literature, and simply felt adrift. We became good friends and kept in touch. She went on to Officer Candidate School and had a great career as an Intelligence Officer. Another enlisted with some medical training and went to Fort Lewis, Washington to become a flight nurse. The military was one of the few places we were paid equal pay for equal work. Female soldiers, airmen, marines and sailors were paid exactly the same wage as their male counterparts based upon rank and time in service.

Boot Camp was grueling but there was also humor. I remember, one of our platoon mates stood nearly six feet tall and she had all the grace of a drunken kangaroo. The Drill Sergeants were always yelling at her to quit swinging her long arms so much during marches. They called her "Gomer Pyle" after the goofy Marine Corps TV character. Nothing seemed to bother her and she was very good natured. She would reign in her drastic arm movements for a few minutes but that attempt at self-control was short-lived and the Drill Sergeants would soon be yelling at her again.

We only spent eight weeks together so most of us didn't become all that close although we learned very quickly if just one of us screwed up...the entire platoon suffered. We also learned how to handle those ladies who had a rough time complying with the rules. We pitched in to help one another to avoid those extra pushups or grass drills.

If someone had a hard time starching and ironing their uniform to the drill sergeants' satisfaction, someone would offer to do that for her and in return she'd shine their shoes, polish their brass or make their cot. We learned how to obey commands, march in step, sing cadence, set up a shelter during bivouac, polish our boots, wear our brass, and maintain our uniforms.

We learned the history of the Army, how to recognize the uniform and ranks of all other branches of service and how to salute properly. We learned the Army song and all those of the other branches of service.

We all took turns pulling KP duty in the mess hall which was the absolute worst! We found out firsthand what a GI Party was and I can still smell the Clorox vapors! We learned proper raising and lowering of the American flag during Reveille and Retreat, how to perform Color Guard duties, and how to fold the flag properly.

The most important lesson we learned was how to work as a unit. How to support one another and kick some tail if necessary, to keep the platoon working together with a common purpose.

Another outcome of our collective time in Boot Camp was developing a sense of patriotism. If we weren't necessarily patriotic when we arrived at Boot Camp we were when we left! Those lessons have remained with me and served me well for a lifetime. I suspect the same is true for my old platoon mates.

By a Cosmopolitan magazine junkie and former US Army soldier





# The Veterans Creed

1. I am an American Veteran
2. I proudly served my country
3. I live the values I learned in the military
4. I continue to serve my community, my country and my fellow veterans
5. I continue to learn and improve
6. I make a difference
7. I honor and remember my fallen comrades



# Lest we forget...



## POW/MIA

So many fates are left unknown  
And so many rumors that abound  
So many families ask the question  
"When will, the answers be found?"

So many years have come and gone  
Sometimes, hope is hard to keep  
There's some who feel there's none  
And in some, it's buried deep.

The pain, is in not knowing  
How, to put loved ones' to rest  
When there is no way to prove  
They have passed, the final test.

But, no matter what the answers  
We can't let this cause alone  
Until, each and every one of them  
Is found, and brought back home

Poem by Del Jones



## New Veterans Support Group in Taos

Last month, Recovery Friendly Taos County (RFTC) initiated a Veterans Peer Support Group. The focus of the group is recovery from substance use and mental health issues – especially post traumatic stress. This is a peer-led group open only to veterans. The group facilitator is a Vietnam Veteran who works at RFTC as a Community Support Worker.

RFTC provides peer support services, community outreach, and group services to residents of Taos County. Their web address is [www.rfnm.org](http://www.rfnm.org). Phone number 575-213-6002. RFTC is a project of Rio Grande Alcoholism Treatment Program (RGATP). RGATP provides adult outpatient substance abuse treatment services to residents in North Central New Mexico. The main office in Taos is located at 105 Paseo del Canon West, Suite A. They also have offices in Raton and Las Vegas, NM. The group meets on Wednesdays at 2pm at the above address. Question? Directions? Contact Bob Johnson at the above phone number or by email at [bob@riograndeatp.org](mailto:bob@riograndeatp.org).



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**WHAT IS VETERANS UPWARD BOUND?  
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**New Mexico  
Veterans  
Upward Bound**