

Ken Miller

This is the fourteenth in a series of articles that we hope to publish for years to come. With this series we want to honor Service Members that served our great Nation. As I mentioned in the last article we need your help to honor these fine Americans. If you have someone you would like us to include, please help us research and develop articles. Our email address is mhamlegionpost113@gmail.com

Ken Miller was born in 1934. He grew up on a farm outside of Mount Horeb and attended Mount Horeb schools, including high school. Ken's life through his teenage years consisted of working on the farm and going to school. After graduation in 1952, he worked for a construction company until he got laid off. When he was in Madison shortly after that he saw sailors, he admired what he saw in them and wanted to be a part of their world. He went straight to a recruiter's office, he knew he that it had to be a better life.

The next day 17 February 1953 Ken joined the United States Navy. Ken looks back fondly to growing up in Mount Horeb but, at the time Ken was ready for something larger than life in Mount Horeb, so he joined the Navy. Like numerous others from the Midwest, Ken went off to training at Great Lakes Naval Station in Illinois.

His first assignment was aboard the USS Peterson (Destroyer Escort-152) which was based out of Key West Florida. He worked as a diesel mechanic. The ship operated as a part of an escort squadron along the east coast of the United States. While he was on the Peterson they had port visits to Denmark, Labrador, and Scotland. In 1956 Ken was reassigned to the Reserve Fleet in Philadelphia.

Ken served on several other ships before he went to Vietnam the first time. He assigned to the USS Hissem, as an inspector. Ken said they did not receive any training before they were given this mission. He said they inspected small family boats and larger boats. The Hissem was in the Gulf of Tonkin to prevent the flow of supplies to the Viet Cong. The tour of duty in Vietnam from 1965 to 1965 was relatively quiet but not without some excitement.

Ken was assigned to the US Naval Training Center at Bainbridge in Port Deposit, MD from 1966 to 1968. He had been promoted to Chief Petty Officer by then. While at the Training Center, Ken served as the head of security. He loved everything about this duty assignment, the work, the location, the entertainment, etc... The assignment is even more special because he married his wife during this assignment.

As Ken tells it the training for the next tour in Vietnam was tougher than both tours. In 1970 Ken was sent to training to become a Navy Advisor. The training was physically and mentally demanding. Ken had to learn the language and the culture. They had to complete the Physical Fitness run in less than 10 minutes initially and then later they had to do it in seven and one-half minutes. They learned camouflage techniques and had to Escape and Evade cadre in the mountains of California. Survival meant eating whatever you could catch and attempting to evade the cadre. They were held in authentic POW camps and the trainers didn't show any mercy. During the actual tour in

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Vietnam Ken said he had some very scary moments but he said they were so busy and the entire year went by very fast. Navy elements were attempting to stop the flow of weapons and ammunition to the Viet Cong. They had numerous skirmishes, sometimes people on both sides died in the firefights other times nobody got hurt. For part of his tour he taught the South Vietnamese how to repair boat engines. He said that when he arrived the boats had a 50% failure rate, when he left it was less than five tenths of a percent.

Ken retired in 1973 after his assignment to the USS Spear in Norfolk Virginia. He stayed in the area and worked in maintenance in the Baltimore, Maryland area at the Perry Point VA Medical Center, at Cecil College and Bainbridge.

Ken spent 20 years in the Navy serving on board several ships, with two tours in Vietnam. His awards include the Vietnam Campaign Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, the Civil Actions Medal, and the Vietnam Cross of Gallantry. He is now 100% disabled due to his exposure to Agent Orange.

At age 84, Ken now lives in Port Deposit, Maryland. Although he lives 1000s of miles away he still has a great affinity for all things Mount Horeb, and he has shown his support to many projects over the years. Ken gives scholarships every year at the High School, he supported the Historium, and recently he sent a large contribution to the Mount Horeb Veterans Memorial. He also recently joined the Mount Horeb American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Post 9511.

The Miller family has a rich history of service to our Nation! Donald Miller is a 1945 graduate of Mt. Horeb High School, is a Navy WWII veteran. He served on the USS New Jersey, USS Topeka and the USS Los Angeles. The second is a picture of Ken's brother Bob Miller, a 1947 Graduate of Mount Horeb High School, he is a U.S. Army Veteran.

Let us Never Forget that Freedom is NOT Free

Compiled by Jerry Hook