



John Garcia

- 1. What made you want to enter military service?**
At the time, I could not afford to go to college. I also wanted to serve our country and travel around the world.
- 2. What branch of the military did you join and why?**
U.S. Navy because it provided me with the best option to travel. The Top Gun movie also contributed to my decision.
- 3. How many years did you serve?** A total of 25 years, 3 months, and 3 days (Active Duty and Reserves).
- 4. What was your rank upon discharge?** E-6 (First Class Petty Officer).
- 5. What has been your greatest achievement in the military?** Of the approximate 1,000 naval reservists serving at Navy Operational Support Center, Millington, TN, I was selected as Sailor of the Year in 2011 and 2014. However, I give credit to the sailors, in my unit, for being top notch performers.
- 6. What lesson did you learn while in the military that you still use today?** a) In order to be a good leader, one must first be a good follower and b) I combine my New York City and family upbringing with my military background. I realize that people from all walks of life exist. Therefore, I learned to treat everyone with the dignity and respect we deserve as humans.
- 7. Did your military service influence your life today?** Most definitely! I met my wife (she is also a Navy veteran) on active duty. I also became a father while serving. We agreed to settle in Memphis, which led to my wonderful career with the Shelby County Sheriff's Office.
- 8. Tell us a funny story that could only happen in the military.** On May 4, 1991, while serving onboard the USS Shasta (AE-33), we were crossing the Equator, either leaving or going to Hong Kong, China. One Navy tradition is to "indoctrinate" any sailor who had never experienced the crossing. This sailor was known as a Pollywog. Once the indoctrination was complete, that sailor would be referred to as a Shellback. The "indoctrination" lasted 24 HOURS! Saying this was a humbling experience, would be an understatement. One particular event involved singing (I believe this may have contributed to the birth of the "American Idol" show). I recall three of us (Wogs) being on our knees, looking through an eye (a hole in which the line/rope of the ship goes through, to the pier, in order to moor/park the ship), and ordered to sing to the school of dolphins. I wish I remembered the song. At the time, it did not seem so funny. But today, it seems pretty darn funny. Only in the Navy!
- 9. What duty station did you most enjoy?** Although I served in other assignments, on land (with weekends off), I had the most fun on the Shasta. I am proud to say I served during Operations Desert Shield/Desert Storm and Southern Watch. We completed two tours in the western Pacific and made multiple stops in Hawaii, the Philippines, Guam, China, Japan, Singapore, and the United Arab Emirates (Bahrain, Dubai, and Fujairah). I celebrated my 21st birthday in Waipahu, Hawaii (at a Chili's). I also tossed my first softball pitch (in 1991) during a 64-team tournament in Dubai, in which we finished in 4th place. The significance is that I have pitched ever since (until my last pitch in 2018).

10. Why did you choose your military job specialty? On active duty, I was not offered a technical school after boot camp. Therefore, I was designated to ship preservation, better known as Deck Department. It consisted of chipping, sanding, priming, and painting the sides of the ship, which was 564 feet long. I also had to shine brass throughout the ship, with nothing more than a brillo-looking pad. I quickly realized I am good with numbers and enjoy helping people (customer service). So, I put in the hard work to become what was known as a Disbursing Clerk. I handled fiscal duties, including the typing of U.S. Treasury checks, payroll, and accounts receivable/payable. By the time I joined the Navy Reserve, I was already employed by the SCSO. So, I switched my specialty to Master-at-arms, which lines up with my current career. I completed Navy Corrections Specialist School, which added to my experience as a former Deputy Jailer and earned a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice, Police Administration.

Thank you for allowing me to be long-winded and share my experiences. It is by the grace of God that I get to do so.