

BIOGRAPHY - David Mena

The 1966 Spring Semester at Texas Western College I was having a whale of a time studying, but mostly drinking beer in Juarez, Mexico. I studied at The Kentucky Club where Julio bartended, Fred's Rainbow Bar (great sandwiches), El Submarino where Joe and Leo bartended, ate Flautas for 15¢ at Ciro's, oh yeah, I was getting one tremendous education! All of my classmates were being drafted or volunteered. Why not me? While drinking our lunch at the Kentucky Club, John Valles and I made a pact which was about to haunt us both, how long we had been indulging in libations that fateful day I do not know. Why not beat the Draft and volunteer for the Draft, how ingenious! Two really savvy Burges grads- Pendejos!

April 7, 1967 I was being "sworn at" by Drill Sergeants Poe and Holguin on Fort Bliss proper; I remember their salutation: "drop and give me fifty, you bald headed pecker-wood!" I graduated from Basic Training as THE OUTSTANDING TROOP- I had gone AWOL, just kidding! From Private E-1 to E-2, now I was no longer lower than snake shit- I was now a Maggot! On my birthday, June 10, 1967, I was on my way to that lovely holiday retreat at Fort Puke (Polk), Lousy Anna (Louisiana) for Advanced Infantry Training (AIT). The place was wonderful; it was called "Tiger Land!" Billboards all over the place telling us that we were the greatest warriors ever, WOWEE! Prior to AIT, I attended and graduated from Leadership Preparatory Course (LPC), now I was E-3, no longer a Maggot, now I was a Turd! Graduated from AIT, now a SPEC-4, and now a Shit Fly- another military milestone! So sad to leave Fort Puke, so many wonderful memories, camping out in trash dumps, the swamps, dodging water moccasins, snakes and mosquitoes- GET ME OUTA HERE!



Fort Meade, MD was my duty station for three months. I hated training in the dead of winter at Camp Drum, NY so I petitioned for warmer climate. Being in the ARMY now for nine months they must have felt sorry for me, they made me a Sergeant, no longer a Shit Fly! And they gave me my wish for warm weather- orders to the LAND OF ENCHANTMENT - VIETNAM! Remember the song "Mama said there'd be days like this, Mama said..." Can you believe it! Tio Samuel was giving me a one year all expense paid vacation to that joyous wonderland; some called it THE LAND OF OPPORTUNITY! Sonavabeach- que menso!

The first part of 1968 "Uncle" landed me in Cam Ranh Bay, Republic of Vietnam. For two days we would gather just to hear our names called out for assignment to an ARMY unit. Finally my name was called! It was an order of sorts. Since I was the "ranking man" twenty soldiers were assigned to me for SHIT BURNING DETAIL. I was not very popular, but I felt a little humor was in order so I told the men they needed to write home and let the folks know that Uncle Sam had sent them 13,000 miles around the world for one of the most charming and delightful jobs, a job sweet as babies breath!



The next day I got orders to join Company A, 2/5, 1st Cavalry Division (Air Mobile). My fondest dreams had come true; at last I was a Grunt! I was happy to be an Infantryman. Those soldiers that flew helicopters or were required to drive wheeled vehicles or tanks were just large targets. There was comfort being close to the ground, bathing in rivers or when it rained. Ambushes, stepping on booby traps, etc. were daily concerns, but a body with clothing that blended into the land was not much of a target, or so I analyzed. We all packed an unbelievable amount of equipment that could weigh fifty to seventy pounds. 20 clips (cartridges) of M-16 ammo, plus 1 clip in the rifle was only the start. All of us had to carry 2 bandoleers of machine gun ammo, 2 pineapple grenades, 2 thermal grenades, M-79 ammo and 2 hand-held flares. Steel pots, maps, knife, machetes, matches, toothbrush, six canteens of water, C-rations for 7 days, all part of the gear.

May 21st 1970, Teresa Holguin became my beautiful bride. On May 9th, 1971 our first child David was born; then Elizabeth Ann on February 19th 1974; next Andrew on July 26th 1981; Frances Marie arrived July 21st 1986. Utilizing my Bachelor of Arts in Public Administration degree I established MENA CONSTRUCTION Co. INC. During the recession of the late 70's I went to work for the Corps of Engineers. In 1996 I accepted a position with International Hospital Corporation as Director of Engineering, Construction, and Facilities. We built and owned hospitals; I was responsible for all aspects of new hospital construction and renovation from project inception, project design, selection and employment of architects, engineers, construction managers, and general contractors; I built 7 hospitals abroad and in the U.S. I enjoyed my interaction with agencies such as: The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; the World Bank; U.S Government Housing and Urban Development; Ministries of Healthcare in Costa Rica; Ministries of Health in Mexico; and Departments of Health throughout the United States. I've been retired for 5 years; Terri and I enjoy a little wine, and treasure visiting our children and our grandkids. Now it's just Mama, me, the monkey, and Maggie!

