**Richard Garza -- U.S. Army**

My name is Richard Garza and I was born on January 26, 1946 in Los Angeles, CA.  I was the last child of Andres and Juanita Garza.  They had six sons and three daughters.  My father was a minister so we moved a lot.  We lived in many different cities and I went to several different schools, which I hated.

I did play sports in high school and college.  Track and cross country were my best sports.  When my father retired we then stayed in one place and I went to one final school.  I got to stay in the same high school for four years.  It was Santiago High School in Garden Grove, CA  After graduation from high school in 1965 I went to Santa Ana College.  There I also ran track and cross country, but then I met a girl names Linda M. Ludwig.  While I attended Santa Ana College I had a part-time job at Disneyland as a cook to earn spending money.

On March 15, 1968 Linda and I were married.  We settled in Garden Grove and found an apartment close to her parents.  Linda decorated it beautifully and little did I know that she would become a better decorator, as our life together progressed.  We were married just about five months when I was drafted into the Army.  I entered the Army on August 22, 1968.  I took basic training at Fort Ord, CA which covers 28,500 acres fo rolling plain and rugged hills that makes it ideal for infantry training.

I had eight weeks of basic training and shot expert with the M 14 rifle and received my expert badge.  During basic training visitors were only allowed to come on Sundays.  My wife always came up to visit and I looked forward to it.  My other came by bus, by herself and I really enjoyed her visits too.  After basic training at Fort Ord we took advanced infantry training there, but we were moved to different barracks.  When I finished my training, I was assigned to Camp Roberts near Paso Robles, CA for 40 days to learn more jungle training.

Finally, after all this training was completed, I was sent to Vietnam on February 22, 1969.  I flew out of Travis Air Force Base.  When I first stepped out of the airplane I thought it was the hottest place in the world.  It was hot.

I was assigned to the 9th division in the Me Kong Delta.  My unit was the 6th Battalion 31st Infantry.  I was there for a whole year.  We went on many ambush patrols.  Many times we were taken by truck, helicopters, and boats into the jungle.  Of course we also walked from a base camp into the jungle. I had many jobs as an infantry soldier.  I carried the radio, sometimes I carried the M 60 machine gun and I would walk point for many months.  With God’s help I came home without a scratch.

From Vietnam I was sent to Fort Riley in Kansas to finish my military obligation.  I had about six months before I was discharged on August 21, 1970.  Now that I was out of the Army, I started my life with Linda.  I got several jobs but when I got hired with United Parcel Service in 1972, and I stayed with them for 29 years.  I drove safely for 28 years without an accident and I got an award for this.

Linda and I have a daughter named Linda Carrie born on April 26, 1974 and a son named Richard Kyle Ludwig born on January 2, 1983.  They have left the nest and now me and Linda are enjoying our retirement.  We do some traveling and stay busy.  We make our home now in Yorba Linda, CA.  I got a medical scare in 2002, nine months after retiring from UPS.  I was diagnosed with throat cancer.  The treatment I was to have was eight weeks of chemotherapy and eight weeks of radiation.  The treatment was so strong that I had to be hospitalized for 51 days.  With God’s help I licked it and have been eight years cancer free.  In 2004, I did get more cancer.  It was prostate cancer and God took care of me again.  Now I am cancer free.

One of the things I do to stay busy and motivated is by attending three veterans groups.  I also march in the Vietnam Day Parade and the Huntington Beach Fourth of July Parade.  My parents gave me strong religious background so we are active in Church too.  Now that my golden years are here, I hope God continues to bless me and my family.