



Veterans Day: Enlistment Should also be Promoted as a Viable Post-Secondary Option

By Educator Barnes – November 11, 2019

Preparing students for college is a focus of schools across America. College is one of the three options students can choose. School districts such as Indianapolis Public Schools focus on the three Es: enroll, enlist, employ. Veterans Day is a day to thank military men and women for their service, but it can also be an opportunity to share with students how enlisting in the military is a viable option.

A couple of years ago, I had the opportunity to interview my father for Veterans Day to discuss his time in the military and his thoughts on education. This year, I interviewed my pops, my father-in-law, James H. Barnes.

Shawnta Barnes: Why did you choose the military?

James Barnes: Well, I didn't exactly choose it. When I graduated from school, I was drafted. After you turned 18, you had a certain time period for when you had to report and sign-up. I was originally assigned to the Army, but I chose the Navy.

SB: Why did you want to switch from the Army to the Navy?

JB: My father was in the Navy. I didn't only switch because my father served in that branch. I decided based on the information he shared with me about his time in the Navy. For example, being on a ship, you didn't have to stay in fox holes. You had a dry bed at night.

SB: What did you do while you were in the Navy?

JB: I was a ship serviceman. I was in charge of the seven stores, and I did the inventory. I'm a social guy. I enjoyed this job because I was able to interact with everyone on the ship.

SB: What did you see as a benefit of serving in the Navy, and would you recommend enlisting in the military to students?

JB: In the Navy, I got to travel around the world. In school, I read about all of these different places. Being in the Navy gave me the opportunity to see the places I read about. I visited Athens, Greece, Barcelona, Spain, Naples, Italy, and the French Riviera. There were so many more places I visited during those four years; I just can't recall them all right now.

I do recommend enlisting in the military to students. College might be out of bounds for some students. You're an educator, so I know you probably already know this, but joining the

military could help put college in reach. There are education benefits, military discounts, and healthcare benefits. It could be a long-term career. I didn't make it my career. I missed being away from home for those long extended periods of time.

SB: What was life like after the military?

JB: I decided to move to Indiana. My brother had already moved there from our home state of Mississippi. He told me there were better jobs and more job opportunities up north. He was right. I found a decent job at Western Electric. I believe the skills I obtained during my time in the service helped me find a good job.

Yes, it is important that teachers are preparing all students for college, but it also important to remember that serving in the military is also an option. Students can grow up to have successful and meaningful lives through military service.