

Tampa Veterans Build 2023

Serving Those Who Served

John Gatling

Air Force Veteran

Born on a military base in Burlington County, New Jersey, John Richards is a distinguished Air Force veteran whose life has been marked by service, resilience, and a pursuit of a brighter future. John dedicated an impressive 16 years of his life to active service, ultimately attaining the rank of Staff Sergeant.

Now at 73 years old, he reflects on a career that took him across the globe, with appointments at MacDill Air Force base, and bases abroad in Germany and England, embodying the essence of a true patriot.

John's military journey was a testament to the complexities of military service. Despite this, he garnered an Air Force Commendation, highlighting his dedication and contributions to his country. John's path into the Air Force was driven by a desire for a better future, free from the constraints of a town plagued by drugs and limited work opportunities.

Enlisting at 25, he sought to escape the grip of poverty and urban unrest. His determination to forge a brighter path led him to serve his country and explore the world. Raised in a single-parent household on a military base, John understood the value of demanding work. At 18, he embarked on a job that required a five-mile trek to and from work each day, a testament to his unwavering work ethic.

It was during his time at MacDill in that John's life took a turn towards love and he met his future wife while she was visiting a friend on base.



--a moment that would become a cherished chapter in their shared story.

John's familiarity with the impactful work of Habitat for Humanity Hillsborough County runs deep. He extends his heartfelt gratitude to the volunteers and corporate sponsors who have made a profound difference in his home and life.

After his military service, John encountered the stark reality of limited resources and opportunities for veterans seeking to reintegrate into civilian life. He found the support offered by Habitat for Humanity Hillsborough County to be invaluable, a beacon of hope for veterans like him.

John Richards' life is a testament to the resilience of the human spirit and the transformative power of community support. His gratitude knows no bounds, and he stands as a living testament to the impact of service, both in uniform and beyond.