

Since Fidel Castro communized Cuba, Gitmo has become a key pressure point in the struggle between East and West. A glance at the map tells of the story of Guantanamo's strategic importance. Together with the US naval station at Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico, Gitmo commands the vital passages to the politically turbulent Caribbean.

It would be a bit of a challenge when you have an 80 pound kid in tenth grade playing against a marine that's 200 pounds.

You were surrounded by military. Still you lived a carefree life; you did not have to worry about crime or drugs or anything of that nature.

(Esp.) What I needed was to work and so I went to work. Only after I was there did I find out that after you come in you could not leave again. There was nothing left to do. Just watch the time go by. I'm the mother of my children. My children were born. The three children that I have were born there. The two twin boys were born first. And then the girl.

Me and my brother, my twin brother, we were born on a naval base in Cuba, actually the first twins born on the base. We spent a good 20 years on the naval base. It is a piece of me that will always be there.

(Esp.) There, after time, I became an air conditioning mechanic. I worked 34 years there that I will never forget. Everyday of my job, much respect, much consideration. It is a big factor for me who works, that they respect you and they consider you. And that I got here, in the time I was there. I have a series of diplomas giving me thanks for my work. Those are things you do not forget, because they have the most important thing, which is that they acknowledge your work. They let you know: your work is well done. And that is worth a lot and you do not find that everywhere either.

It was a place where you got to know everybody real well. It was a military base but still it had a home, like a home-style type of feeling to it. It was not some kind of place where you could just drive and go somewhere else. You have got mine fields on one side, water on the other, but even though you were confined to that area, you did not feel it. You did not feel like you were trapped.

(Esp.) There it is just one thing. Only a big base, but not a city. There, everything is just one town. Life is very tranquil, very tranquil. In big cities that kind of familiarity does not exist the way it exists in small towns.

We only had one high school so we did not actually compete against other high school students; we would actually compete against the military.

Even though you were in twelfth grade you knew the person in seventh grade because you were all in the same building. You got to meet a lot of the people that came on to the base and they... some of them were only there for a maximum of two years. Some of them you grew up with.

When my brothers graduated they were there for about a year after they graduated and then they left to go to school so it was my parents and myself and I eventually was going to leave to further my education so we had the opportunity to come to Miami, buy a home and that basically was the reasoning. Moving here to Miami was such a kind of a culture shock for me because moving to a big city from a small, you know, spot on the map, I should say, it was a big difference, you know, and it was a lot to get used to and not try to have people with peer pressure force you to do things you did not want to do. So it took a lot. My father obviously stayed back another ten years more or less to get his retirement before he moved over here with us.

I have not been back since I left in '83 and I say all the time I would love to go back even for a weekend just to walk around and see the changes and see some of the old stuff that you left behind but I carry it in my heart; I just close my eyes and I can go back to the memories and feed off that because I had a lot of good memories down there and I cherish that.