

The Vietnam War was a highly controversial and debatable historical event in the United States. The war caused havoc and rebellion in the United States because people did not understand why the United States needed to get involved. The war was brutal due to harsh conditions, and the notorious Viet Cong. Many soldiers were injured and killed during the war. The Vietnam War was a memorable historical event, which is why I interviewed my grandfather, Daniel F. Pleshek, is a Vietnam Veteran. He shared with me his job during the war and where he was stationed, his overall experiences, and how the war affected his life afterward.

My grandpa was drafted to the military October 7, 1969. He was only 20 years old, which was a common age of soldiers recruited for the Vietnam War. After a few months of training he was sent to Germany. He was stationed there for seven months and then was sent to base at Chu Lai, Vietnam. There he became a part of Company B 4th Platoon. He was part of the infantry which meant he would march in a line with his fellow soldiers, and every once in awhile he would have to walk point to make sure the area was safe to travel. Due to the fact that they were always moving, he camped in the jungle most of his time in service. He was not stationed anywhere for very long. This led to many events and experiences during his service time.

On December 4, 1970, he was walking through the heavy brush in a rice paddy when he hit a tripwire that was connected to a land mine. When the landmine was triggered, the device exploded and sent shrapnel flying and piercing the air. Some of the shrapnel punctured both of my grandpa's legs. He had to be "dusted off" to the Chu Lai Mash Unit for his injuries. He was then shipped to Cam Ranh where he spent 30 days recovering. After recovery, my grandfather was rehabilitated and sent back to Chu Lai. He rejoined his unit in the beginning of January

David Joslin-Pleshek

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1971. He spent all of January and the beginning of February in the field with his unit. When I asked my grandpa what the conditions were like in Vietnam, he snickered and told me, "The weather was always very hot, and it seemed like it never stopped raining." On February 14, my grandpa was walking point down the trail with his assistant gunner. The weather conditions in Vietnam at the time were horrid and humid. Due to this, he needed to sit down for a little while because his legs were sore from his previous injuries. He saw a rock off the side of the trail that he was going to sit on. In the interview he said, "I saw that there was remains of what used to be an explosive device next to the rock. I really needed to sit down and I thought 'lightning doesn't strike twice in the same place,' but I was severely wrong. When I sat down all I remember is seeing my gun fly in the air and I was close to passing out."

A World War II Pineapple Grenade was triggered and exploded. This grenade was used by the French when they fought in Vietnam years before. When the grenade exploded it again released shrapnel. My grandpa suffered shrapnel wounds to both legs, his left leg was broken, and his right knee had shrapnel lodged in the knee joint. He was sent to the Chu Lai Mash Unit for a second time. He spent four days there and later was sent to Da Nang, Vietnam, for hospitalization. He recovered there for a week and then was sent to Camp Zama in Japan. He stayed in Japan for two weeks and received casts on both of his legs. After his two weeks he was then sent to the Great Lakes Naval Hospital in Illinois. He stayed there for about seven to eight weeks. He was sent home on convalescent leave until August. He was honorably discharged on August 9, 1971. After his service he received 2 Bronze Stars, and 2 Purple Hearts. His time in service may seem short, but I sense they were the longest three years of his life.

Lastly, when I asked my grandpa how he feels about the war and how it affected his life today, he truly didn't have anything good to say. His first response to the question, "How do you feel about the war?" was "It was a needless loss of life. I became close to the men I served with and I can only remember some of them, and never see them again, because they came home in a coffin." I could tell that he truly meant it because as he answered a sudden shade of sadness and disgust covered his face. I let him calm down a little bit and then I asked him the second question: "How has the war affected your life today?". A person could easily read his posture and facial expression and understand that there were a lot of negative effects the war had on his life. He answered, "For starters, I have medical issues in both of my legs and my back which inflicts a lot of aches and pains on my body. I have issues with my hearing and I need hearing aids. The war also caused some mental issues in my life as well." The war also took a toll on his body physically, other than his multiple injuries. When he was in the jungle the food was in small proportion and the water needed to be purified with tablets. Since it was always raining and he was walking through tall brush the tablets and the food would get wet and go bad. This led him and his unit to go days without food and they were forced to drink the water. The water was bad and gave a lot of the soldiers the Scurvy, which also affected their nutrition. When my grandpa joined the military he weighed 185 pounds and when he went back home on discharge he only weighed 155 pounds. He lost 30 pounds due to the lack of food and nutrition while camping in the jungle. The last effect the war had on his life was losing his wife Diane Stadler. When he returned from the war she claimed he had changed and that she did not like the man he became. He sacrificed a lot for a war that he believes was "a needless loss of life".

The Vietnam War was a controversial and devastating time in the history of the United States. The war affected my grandpa, Daniel F. Pleshek, in many ways that negatively impacted his life today. In summary, the war was a sad and disgusting time for those who lost loved ones, and those who had to serve and watch as their buddies lose their lives.