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Katelin L. Forbes
Richard T. Nuske Memorial Scholarship 2020/2021
"Interview with an US Vietnam Veteran"

It is with enthusiasm that I am applying for the Richard T. Nuske Memorial Scholarship awarded by the Vietnam Veterans of America Wisconsin State Council. Receiving this recognition will help by assisting me financially while I study Business Administration at University of Wisconsin-Green Bay. My ultimate career goal is to become a Marketing Analyst. I feel I am a worthy candidate for your consideration as I learned a considerable amount about what the impact of the Vietnam War had on its soldiers. I learned that there are many different components of war other than just being on the front line.

My new knowledge about the Vietnam War is due to my Grandpa agreeing to talk about his experiences. Over the years my Grandpa never really opened up about his service in the Vietnam War. I remember, in the past, that my Mom told me that Grandpa was a Vietnam Veteran, but she didn't know any details as he would never talk about it. I was curious as to what he did in the service and I decided to ask him about the Vietnam War thinking he would not want to talk about it. Luckily, my Grandpa said, without hesitation, "Well, what would you like to know?" This made me overly excited that my Grandpa was willing to talk about the Vietnam War and his responsibilities in the Marine Corps.

While talking to my Grandpa about his time in the Marine Corps, I learned that he served for two years, starting on May 31, 1968 to May 30, 1970. From the beginning, my Grandpa shared that at the age of 19, he enlisted in the Marine Corps so that he would not have to be drafted. After he enlisted, he was stationed in California at Camp Pendleton Boot Camp for three months. At boot camp he learned basic training which included learning discipline, and the use of many

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weapons like grenades and firearms. He learned how to use, load and disassemble weapons. After the three months at Camp Pendleton, he went home, to Wisconsin, for 20 days before deploying to Danang Vietnam for 13 months.

While my Grandpa was stationed in Danang Vietnam, he worked a clerical job where he was responsible for checking in new soldiers when they arrived. My Grandpa made sure that the new soldiers were on the correct transportation to where they were going to be stationed. He also had the responsibility of keeping track of when soldiers were able to go back home. He would make sure the soldiers were where they needed to be and processed them to go back home. This was one of his favorite things to do in Vietnam. Clerical work is what my Grandpa did during the day, everyday. My Grandpa worked the clerical job with only one other soldier, occasionally switching off. He also did patrols and guard duty at night time. When he was not on patrol, he was back at the headquarters where he had contact with the soldiers that were out on patrol. My Grandpa would make sure they were doing alright. If the soldier on patrol needed help, my Grandpa would place more soldiers on patrol to help with whatever conflict was happening. My Grandpa explained that he rarely had any time off. He did not have a schedule due to inconsistencies in never knowing what was going to happen. The mess halls were open 5am-9am for breakfast, 11am-2pm for lunch, and 4pm-8pm for dinner, so he ate when he had time. Over his very rare spare time, my Grandpa would drive the General around, like a chauffeur, when the General's driver was not available.

According to my Grandpa, the hardest part of being in Vietnam was when the young soldiers would arrive to be processed and he would have to station them in places that were in poor condition. It made him feel terrible knowing where he needed to send the young soldiers. Another difficult thing for my Grandpa was when conflict would occur during the night patrol, and he was at the headquarter, knowing he could not physically help them, but had to send other

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soldiers out to help. Reciprocally, the most rewarding part of his service was when he worked hard and was able to get soldiers to help resolve a conflict that occurred during the night patrol. This was very rewarding for him knowing that his hard work to get extra soldiers out on night patrol helped resolve a conflict. The part that stood out to me the most was that the hardest thing for my Grandpa to go through, turned into the most rewarding thing as well.

Following the 13 months in Danang, Vietnam, my Grandpa went home for another 20 days. After the 20 days at home, reunited with his family, he went to Camp Lashun in Parris Island, South Carolina in January of 1970. Camp Lashun is the east coast boot camp for Marines. It was there that my Grandpa helped to recruit soldiers for the Marines. After his five months at Camp Lashun, he went home for good on May 30, 1970.

My Grandpa said, "I feel very proud to have served my country." Serving for our country has made my Grandpa proud to be an American to this day. Another touching thing that my Grandpa told me was that if there was any war going on right now where people were being drafted, he would enlist himself and do everything over again for our country. This made me proud of how much faith my Grandpa has in our country and how patriotic he is.

Before talking to my Grandpa, I thought of war as a gruesome battlefield in terrible conditions that every soldier available was doing. I realize now that there are more jobs in the service than just those fighting on the front lines. I learned that the soldiers have been through the absolute hardest thing they will ever go through. Also, I was amazed at how many different jobs there are in the service that need to work together to keep soldiers safe.

Listening to my Grandpa talk about the Vietnam War was very emotional for us both. His voice would crackle and be lower when he was talking about the unfortunate things that he saw or

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had to do and his voice was energetic and vibrant when he talked about all the good events that happened. I felt like I was living the moment right along with him.

I learned about the Vietnam War in my history class and thought it taught me everything about the War, but after talking to my Grandpa, I learned that I really only knew a fraction about what the war was really like. Listening to my Grandpa talk about the war, with all the emotions and details, has impacted me in a way that could never be taught from a history textbook.

Where is my Grandpa today? He is living in Appleton, Wisconsin. He enjoys fishing and traveling with my Grandma. He is a long-time, 55 year, member of the American Legion. I appreciate my Grandpa for opening up and sharing his experiences with me about the Vietnam War. I am very proud of my Grandpa for serving our country. Thank you Company Clerk Thomas G. Felzer, my Grandpa.

