



1st Battalion-20th Infantry
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Veterans Day

The Seventh Annual Charlie Company Reunion will be held at the Hilton Cincinnati Airport in Florence, KY on June 8 & 9. The room rate will remain the same as the last two years (\$85). Poll results indicate many would like to go on another riverboat cruise and a Friday night dinner cruise (or cruise only) will be scheduled after the New Year. Expect another **TEE-N-TEA** Saturday. The golfers will be out early that morning and *Yesterday's Café and Tea Room* brunch has been a wonderful event for the ladies! Mark those dates on your calendar!

The Right Kid for the Job

Fifth grader Ashby Cartee wanted to escort a veteran at their school's special day to honor veterans last spring. To do so he would have to write a paper explaining why he should be chosen for this honor. His paper was good enough and he got to escort a Pearl Harbor survivor to the program. To Ashby's surprise, his grandfather, Ronnie Ray (1970-71), was another of the veterans attending that day!

Ashby has since read his paper at Grandpa's local MOPH meeting. They appreciated it and I hope you do too.

I should be picked to escort a veteran because I know the true meaning of supporting our veterans. I would like to escort a veteran because they fought for our freedom. It does not matter what war they are from they are still important to us and our country.

I come from a long generation of veterans that have served in every branch of the military. My great, great grandfather fought in WWI. All of my great grandfathers fought in WWII. One was even disabled from the injuries he suffered. I have a great uncle who fought in the Korean War. I also have over six great uncles who fought in WWII. One of them lost his life. One of my grandfathers fought in the Vietnam War.

I have my very own special veteran. I am talking about my grandpa Ronnie Ray because he fought for our freedom. He is my hero because he fought in the Vietnam War. He is the bravest man I know. It makes me proud to know that my grandpa stood up for our country. He got a purple heart because a booby trap exploded and it left shrapnel in his legs. The man behind him survived, but still suffers from the injuries he received.

What is a veteran? I think a veteran is a hero who fought for his country and what he believes. The dictionary states a veteran is someone who has served in the US Armed Forces. A veteran is much more than that. My grandpa has a poem that sums it up best for me. The poem states:

"Remember.....

It is the soldier, not the reporter who gives you freedom of the press.

It is the soldier, not the poet who gives you freedom of the speech.

It is the soldier, not the campus organizer who allows you to demonstrate.

It is the soldier, who salutes the flag, serves the flag whose coffin is draped with the flag that allows the protester to burn the flag!"

Author unknown

A veteran is what makes and has made our country. Veterans make the ultimate sacrifice leaving their home and families to fight for past present and future generations. Thank you veterans for you service to our country. Only two people have shed their blood for me- Veterans and Jesus Christ. (Ashby Cartee)

Gain A Day, Lose A Lifetime

A portion of a recent email exchange is included to add another perspective to Veterans Day.

*I read your paper **Gain A Day, Lose A Lifetime** on the web after searching Duc Pho Vietnam War. It is a very honest account of your (and other Vietnam War Vets) experiences during the war. The paper is very well written and you deserved that A.*

Anyway, I just wanted to let you and your fellow brothers in arms know that I and a lot of other Vietnamese appreciate your sacrifices and all your efforts in fighting communism in South Vietnam and especially in our district of Duc Pho.

Thank you for being there in our country, in our cities and in our villages to help weed out the VCs. As I understand, It was the worse of time where the ruthless VCs would successfully go into villages and hamlets and feared ordinary, poor people into collaborating with them or the consequences would be far too great, often would result in death. They would successfully turned villagers against each other, or caused family to split and forced to take their side, or to accommodate them. So I understand your frustrations and hatred for the people at the time because often it's extremely difficult to know who to trust. So in the face of great fear or life and dead situation, one would probably go mad after being in the field for awhile.

On a whole I have read lots of account of experiences from Vietnam War Vets during their tour of duty in Vietnam. I have seen lots of pictures of you guys during your trip to Vietnam, or in the field patrolling, or around the areas you were based or even on R n R. Although many of you were either in your late teens or were less than 25 years of age, you guys were very brave, you formed a very strong bond with your fellow brothers in arms (because out there you rely on each other to survive), you've been to places where not a lot of ordinary Vietnamese have been-you've walked the whole South Vietnam's countryside, you probably know it much better than many of us. In one year of tour and it provided you guys with a lifetime worth of experiences and memories however bad they might be at times.

Anyway, just a few lines to let you all know my appreciation and thank you for the sacrifices you made at such a young age to come to a far away land, South Vietnam to help fight communism. You should all be proud of the contribution you've made. I am really sorry that you guys weren't treated well on your return home and did not receive a well deserved welcome home until years later.

*Best wishes to you all, always. You guys are the heroes. **Tina Nguyen.***

Michael Stinnett replied: Thank you so much for these kind words! I never dreamed anyone from Vietnam would read the paper and respond as you have done. Actually I didn't offer to let anyone read the paper for years except family members so for it to have "gotten" to you is even more surprising.

Your insight about the VC was accurate but I hope you don't think all of us had a hatred for the Vietnamese people in total. Many of the pictures in the photo albums on our web site contain not just GI photos but often have pictures of kids and you'll notice both parties are smiling. I still remember being in a ville (probably Mo Duc, just north of Duc Pho) around Thanksgiving and "entertaining" a bunch of kids. They were teaching me Vietnamese words and having a good time laughing at my attempts to pronounce them. I wasn't the only GI doing things like this.

Thank you for reading the paper with an open mind as I'm sure many today still think of those who served in Vietnam as being the bad guys. I appreciate also the fact you have read this with an open heart. When someone reads or hears of our experiences and tries to understand what it was like being there is different from someone just reading for facts. Your email response indicates you have read it a way that saw a bunch of young guys far away from home and hoping they'd be back again when their year was over. You mentioned "experiences"... some have called this a "million dollar" experience. That is what it was worth to them but they would have paid a million not to do it again!

Tina wrote back: *Actually I am a Viet Kieu (Vietnamese living overseas). Our extended family escaped Vietnam by boat in the early 80's. For years growing up, even well before I left VN at age about 10, many stories were told by villagers, relatives, family members of their experiences or run in with Vietnamese communists both during and after the war years. They succeeded in instilling extraordinary fear into poor peasants/farmers, villagers, ordinary people both the old and the young.*

As a young person after the war, I guess I was lucky among children of my age to have traveled long distances by train and buses (often unreliable, old, filthy and inefficient etc....) to different parts of the country so I was able to see, hear and experience things that kids my age did not. Often we traveled to Saigon and Vung Tau, all the way from Duc Pho, to spend time with my grand parents, relatives and more importantly waiting for the next escape boat out of Vung Tau.

I remember there was a lot of fear, threats, lack of freedom to move about, curfews, extreme poverty, human sufferings and boy did they really keep a tight leash on the people. In the early years after the war they were successful in turning neighbours into spying/dobing on their neighbours, encouraged children to dob in on their parents and relatives turn against each other etc....it seems everything people do, they have ways to find out. It's like they have 10 spies for every person there is.

I suppose my years of travels as a child and continued interest in the Vietnam war, the country, its people and its way of life have allow me to have an open mind about the involvement of America and its allies in Vietnam during the war years.

Those who served in Vietnam, whether Americans, Australians, New Zealanders or Koreans should have been commended and not seen as the bad guys. They were there because the policies of the government at the time see fit for their troops to be there. There should have been support for the troops from the people all the way.

I do not think that all those who served had a hatred for the Vietnamese people in total. Sure there were a lot of frustrations, mistrusts and suspicions but that's due to the reality of the way the war situation was progressing. I am sure that almost all GIs have some of their photos with the local kids happily mucking about with them very innocently. It must have been a sight and good feeling (however short lived) to have mass of children following or gathering around you all (for lollies, to say hello or to have a few friendly giggles) whenever you arrived at a ville or to sell you stuff like soft drinks, cigarettes etc. on your patrols.

*You are most welcome to share the contents of my email(s) with the guys. **Best regards, Tina Nguyen***

A BOY MEETS GOD

Look God: I have never spoken to You,
But now I want to say, "How do You do."
You see God, they told me You did not exist;
And, like a fool, I believed all of this.

Last night from a shell hole I saw Your sky;
I figured right then they had told me a lie.
Had I taken the time to see the things You made,
I would know they weren't calling a spade a spade.

I wonder, God, if You would shake my hand;
Somehow, I feel that You will understand.
Strange, I had to come to this hellish place
Before I had time to see Your face.

Well, I guess there isn't much more to say,
But I am sure glad, God, I met You today.
I guess the zero hour will soon be here,
But I am not afraid since I know You are near.

The signal - well, God, I will have to go;
I love You lots, this I want You to know.

Looks like this will be a horrible fight;
Who knows, I may come to Your house tonight.

Though I wasn't friendly with You before,
I wonder, God, if You would wait at the door.
Look, I am crying, me shedding tears!
I wish I had known You these many years.

Well, I will have to go now, God. Goodbye -
Strange, since I met You, I am not afraid to die.

(Author Unknown)

This poem was found on the body of a nineteen-year-old American soldier in Vietnam.

Just four articles this time, each with a different viewpoint about veterans. Hope you appreciate the perspectives. May God bless each of you and your families.