

Giving Back

In the fall of 2021, I was notified that I had been selected to be inducted into the OCS Hall of Fame in the Spring of 2022 for lifetime achievements. A great honor for sure. I have been a member of the OCS Alumni Association for many years having joined because OCS played such a huge part of my life. As a member of 50th Company I graduated in Class 4-60 10 October 1960 from Infantry OCS at Fort Benning.

I dug out my OCS yearbook and set upon a search to see if I locate the other members of my class. I knew that my roommate Captain Joseph A Tomko for part of the course had died from wounds he got in Vietnam. As I searched for other members, I found that one other member of my class, First Lieutenant Charles M Hasper, had been killed in a Helicopter crash in early 1964, when piloting a group of South Vietnamese into a landing zone.

Having only hometowns to work with I sought to locate their next of kin. Joe had entered the Army from Aliquippa, Pennsylvania and Charles from Keokuk, Iowa. I was able to locate Joe's sister in Northern Virginia and Charles's daughter who lived in Texas.

Prior to my induction I spent time learning more about what to expect and what our Association was doing to preserve the legacy of OCS. One project is the OCS Walk of fame in the OCS Battalion area. One of the many markers placed as shown there marks the legacy.



I found out that many individuals, classes, organizations have all marked their contributions by placing a memorial in this walkway to represent their connection to OCS.

As a tribute to these the fallen members of Class 4-60 I ordered a marker be placed from my class as a tribute to them. My small way of giving back. I also purchased 5X8 Copies of the marker to present to the family members.



Presenting to the family members became my next task. Charles Hasper's daughter lives in Plano Texas and I in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. A fellow member of the Association George Bannon reached out to the 45 living members of his Artillery OCS class 1-67 and immediately a volunteer, Russell Walker came forward as he lived some in the area. George said the class motto "Cooperate and graduate" still applies in his appeal to the class.

The daughter, Shellie Rae Hasper Gentle had a tie our class more than fact that Charles was her father. She was born in August of 1960 at the hospital at Fort Benning. Our class period was April to October of that year.

Pictured on the next page is from the presentation to Shellie Rae by Russell Walker.



The presentation to Joe Tomko's sister turned out to be a very special undertaking. His sister, Macrina "Mac" Galloway, and her husband Steve also an OCS graduate live just South of the Washington Metro area. When I contacted Macrina we agreed to meet at the Vietnam Memorial Wall for the presentation on Veterans Day 2022. Just prior to making the trip she sent me a note with a copy of a booklet which was compiled by the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund who were going to celebrate the "The Enduring Legacy" "Forty Years of Healing," of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial that day.

On the back cover of the 171-page booklet was written, "The Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. is one of the most iconic places of remembrance in America, even nearly 50 years after the war ended and 40 years since the wall was dedicated. It enabled the healing of a generation – and a nation – after one of the most divisive times in our nation's history. It changed the way we mourn the fallen. It paved the way for every memorial that came after it.

On its 40th Anniversary, these stories reflect the many ways the Wall continues to impact our nation today – stories of loss and remembrance, of healing and reconciliation, of service and honor. The booklet has five sections, with several articles on each. “The Earliest Days of the Memorial,” “Lasting Legacy of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial,” “Stories of Service,” “Stories of Healing,” and finally “Each name has a Story.”

From the “Stories of healing” is the following”

My Brother Joe
By Macrina “Mac” Galloway”

QUOTE:

My brother Joe is one panel 21 East, Line 19 of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

My family never got over his death. My parents were Gold Star parents. Mom was even buried in her Gold Star Uniform!!! My Dad died before the wall was erected. My mother and my other brother Rich never saw the wall in person. . . they just couldn't do it.

After Joe died, Rich left our hometown in Pennsylvania and went West. He married a girl from San Francisco and retired as a math schoolteacher. He still cries like I do for Joe and what could have been!

Joe has such an impact on my family's life in so many ways. It changed our lives forever when he died – as I know it did for every family who has a name on The Wall.

Because of Joe, I spent three years as an Army nurse. I volunteered to serve in Vietnam in 1968-69. It was one of the best years of my life. What an experience taking care of our wounded and those so ill with some very strange illnesses.

I have been blessed with a great Retired military husband, three daughters and five grandchildren. My husband and I volunteer at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. I cry with all the Vietnam Veterans and their families.

My favorite place is the Vietnam Women's Memorial, where I talk about the women who served in Vietnam – especially the eight who died when serving there. I was there for the dedication of the Women's Memorial and proudly walked down Constitution Avenue with the nurses from the 95th Evacuation Hospital in DaNang. My hospital still tries to have a reunion every two years.... We will keep going as long as possible.

Someone recently posted on Facebook, when you die and go to heaven, who is the first person you want to see I posted, “my big brother Joe.”

UNQUOTE

Veterans Day 2022 was a very rainy day. Along with other members of the Associations Capital chapter I helped place wreaths on the three mall memorials, WWII, Korea, and Vietnam and capped it with the meeting with Joe's sister.

Pictured is from the latter.



Rewards for giving back come in many forms. Some so very sweet.